dissent

$4.00/Winter 1987

ROBERT LEKACHMAN

Yuppies, Technocrats and Neoliberals

ERAZIM KOHÁK
Europe After Chernobyl, or the Relevance of Tolstoy

ROY MEDVEDEV
Soviet Culture: A Bit of Light in a Dark World

ROBERT KUTTNER
Will Unions Organize Again?

JOSEPH CLARK
Beginning of the End of Reaganism

GEORGE FREDRICKSON
C. Vann Woodward —the Renaissance of Southern History

JAN GROSS
Poles & Jews in the Second World War

MICHAEL HARRINGTON
What Mitterrand Did, and Failed to Do

PAUL BERMAN
Anti-Imperialism of Fools

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New from Human Sciences Press

THE AIR CONTROLLERS' CONTROVERSY

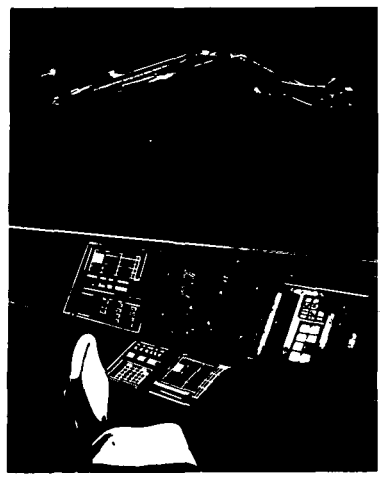
Lessons from the patco *Strike*

Arthur B. Shostak, Ph.D. and David Skocik, M.A.

"In this highly readable and insightful account, the authors take us inside the control towers, inside the negotiations, and inside the lives of the controllers and their families. It's all here: the stresses and the strategies, the pain and the blame . . . and some thoughtful reflections for the future."
—Albert Shanker
President
American Federation of Teachers

"Shostack and Skocik have drawn one of the most complete and objective portraits of the air traffic controllers' strike. Important reading for anyone concerned about air safety or labor relations in this country, especially at a time when both seem to be suffering serious setbacks."
—Paul Nussbaum
Journalist

"The study is the most extensive that has been made of the dismissed controllers."
—William Serrin
The New York Times



1986
0-89885-319-2
0-89885-320-6

274 pp.
hard $34.95
paper $15.95

Friedman, Maurice, Ph.D.

MARTIN BUBER AND THE ETERNAL

This is Maurice Friedman's latest work on the renowned Jewish philosopher. The most concise of his fifteen books, it is an integral statement of Buber's philosophy of religion as Friedman has plumbed and engaged with it in his more than thirty years of work on Buber's life and thought.

"This thoroughgoing study of his religious philosophy makes us see that "salvation" for Buber meant relatedness to others and divine revelation in the here-and-now."
—Publishers Weekly

"Erudite . . . a challenging introduction to Buber's thought for those with some background in theological hair-splitting. Buber emerges as a bold, wily thinker, able to deal with Nazism, religious plurality, and other modernisms without slipping off his firm traditional base."
—Kirkus Reviews

1986
0-89885-284-6

191 pp.
$16.95

Macdonald, Nancy

HOMAGE TO THE SPANISH EXILES

Voices from the Spanish Civil War

Preface by Mary McCarthy

"For a sense of Spain and Spaniards in the Civil War and its aftermath there could be no better introduction than the story of "Spanish"—Homage to the Spanish Exiles.
—from the Preface by Mary McCarthy

1987
0-89885-325-7

263 pp. (approx.)
$26.95

Zeligs, Dorothy F., Ed.D.

MOSES

A Psychodynamic Study

"I find your interpretation of the maternal side of Moses quite intriguing and have never seen this aspect of his personality delineated before."
Murray H. Sherman, Ph.D.
Editorial Board
Psychoanalytic Review

1986
0-89885-236-6

460 pp.
hard $39.95

HUMAN SCIENCES PRESS, INC.
72 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10011-8004

Phone orders: (212) 243-6000
(have credit card information ready)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SKIP THIS

If . . .

You have already contributed to the bi-annual *Dissent* fund drive. But if not, *read on.*

We seem to be off to a good start, but we don't really know yet, since our "lead time"—the interval between editorial preparation and actual appearance of an issue—is long.

Final results in the next issue.

But let us say this: Our survival depends on the generosity of our friends. *It's the margin that makes the difference.* Most of the money goes for routine costs; but if there is a little left over, we can take editorial initiatives and do some promotion.

So please—now!

THE EDITORS

I enclose a check for $.....

In addition I pledge $ ..... payable at the following date(s).....

Name.....

Street.....

City..... State..... Zip.....

All Contributions Are Tax Deductible. Please make checks payable to: F.S.I.S.I.
521 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Socialist Scholars Conference

Against Domination: State, Class, Race, Gender

April 10, 11 & 12, 1987

Boro of Manhattan Community College, CUNY
199 Chambers Street (near Trade Center), New York City

The usual suspects and hundreds more. . .

- William Tabb
- Joanne Landy
- Bogdan Denitch
- Barbara Ehrenreich
- Joanne Barkan
- Andrew Arato
- May Britt Therin
- Paul Sweezy
- Irving Howe
- Michael Harrington
- Robert Lekachman
- Fred Siegel
- Jean Cohen
- Luciana Castellina
- Joseph Murphy
- Paulette Pierce
- Frances Fox Piven
- Daniel Singer
- Cornel West
- Ruth Milkman
- Judith Lorber

Sponsors/Participants (in formation)
CUNY Ph.D. Program in Sociology, and *Dissent, Nation,* Institute for Democratic Socialism, Mid-Atlantic Radical Historians Organization, *Monthly Review, Social Policy, Social Text, Socialist Review, Telos,* CUNY Democratic Socialist Graduate Student Club, South End Press, The Fabian Society, The Generation After, *The Progressive, In These Times, New Left Review, New Politics,* Radical Philosophy Association, *The New Society, Science and Society,* Campaign for Democracy—East and West, *Semiotext, Cineaste,* The Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, *Socialist Politics, Dialectical Anthropology,* New York Committee for Marxist Education, Bergin & Garvey Publishers, *The Guardian,* Union for Radical Political Economics.

1987 Registration Form

Make checks payable to "Social Scholars Conference" and mail to:
R.L. Norman, Jr.,
CUNY Democratic Socialists Club, Rm. 800,
33 West 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Preregistration

_____$17.50 _____$10 (1 day) _____$10 (student/low income)

Regular Registration

_____$25.00 _____$12.50 (1 day) _____$12.50 (student/low income)

Professional Childcare available during the day on Saturday and Sunday.

☐ I need childcare for _____ children.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____State_____Zip_____

GD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dissent

WINTER 1987

EDITORS:
Irving Howe
Michael Walzer

EXECUTIVE EDITOR:
Emanuel Geltman

MANAGING EDITOR:
Maxine Phillips

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR:
Luther Carpenter

BUSINESS MANAGER:
Simone Plastrik

EDITORIAL BOARD:
Bernard Avishai
Joanne Barkan
David Bensman
Marshall Berman
H. Brand
David Bromwich
Joseph Buttinger
Joseph Clark
Jean L. Cohen
Mitchell Cohen
Lewis Coser
Rose Laub Coser
Bogdan Denitch
George Eckstein
Cynthia Fuchs Epstein
Michael Harrington
Murray Hausknecht
Robert Heilbroner
Martin Kilson
Erazim Kohák
William Kornblum
Jeremy Larner
Robert Lekachman
Mark Levinson
Norman Mailer
Deborah Meier
Nicolaus Mills
Carol O'Cleireacain
Martin Peretz
Jack Rader
Ronald Radosh
Bernard Rosenberg
James Rule
Fred Siegel
Meyer Schapiro
Brendan Sexton
Patricia Cayo Sexton
Ronnie Steinberg
Peter Steinfels
Edith H. Tarcov
Dennis Wrong

COMMENTS AND OPINIONS
5
Erazim Kohák . . . Jim Sleeper . . . James B. Rule . . . Joseph Clark . . . Peter Connolly

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON
20
POLITICAL CHANGES IN THE SOUTH
by Thomas Byrne Edsall

REPORTS FROM ABROAD
23
Juan E. Corradi . . . Desmond Morton . . . Gerald Sorin . . . Jim Beebe

ARTICLES
34
YUPPIES, TECHNOCRATS, AND NEOLIBERALS: CHILLY THOUGHTS ON THE NATIONAL FUTURE *by Robert Lekachman*
46
BITS OF LIGHT IN A GRAY WORLD: CULTURAL LIFE IN THE SOVIET UNION *by Roy Medvedev*
52
WILL UNIONS ORGANIZE AGAIN? *by Robert Kuttner*
63
THE SECRET LIFE OF CAPITALISM: THE STORIES OF A. H. ROBINS AND THE MANVILLE CORPORATION *by Murray Hausknecht*
66
THE RENAISSANCE OF SOUTHERN HISTORY: OR THE LIFE AND WORK OF C. VANN WOODWARD *by George Fredrickson*
73
POLISH–JEWISH RELATIONS DURING THE WAR: AN INTERPRETATION *by Jan Gross*
82
MITTERRAND'S TERM: A BALANCE SHEET *by Michael Harrington*
93
CAN STEEL BE SAVED? *by David Bensman and Roberta Lynch*

COMMUNICATIONS
98
WAS THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR "OUR CAUSE"?
An exchange between Irving Howe and Ronald Radosh

NOTEBOOK
102
Paul Berman . . . Linda A. Rabben . . . Stanley Crouch

IN THE MAGAZINES
110
Brian Morton and Mark Levinson

BOOK REVIEWS
113
Robert Lekachman . . . David Nasaw . . . David J. Garrow . . . Oliver Conant . . . George Packer

LETTERS
126

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

JIM BEEBE, formerly editor of the *Whitehorse Star*, is now executive assistant to the Yukon premier.

PAUL BERMAN writes for the *Village Voice* and is a fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities.

OLIVER CONANT's articles and reviews have appeared in the *New Leader*, *Virginia Quarterly*, and other publications.

PETER CONNOLLY practices law in Washington, D.C. and writes on political subjects.

JUAN E. CORRADI teaches sociology at New York University. He spent his recent sabbatical year doing research in Argentina, France, and the United States. His work on *Fear and Society* will appear in 1987.

STANLEY CROUCH is a staff writer for the *Village Voice* and is working on collections of short fiction, essays, jazz pieces, and a biography of Charlie Parker.

THOMAS BYRNE EDSALL covers national politics for the *Washington Post*. He is the author of *The New Politics of Inequality*.

GEORGE M. FREDRICKSON is William Smith Mason professor of American history at Northwestern University. Among his books are *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* and *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*.

DAVID J. GARROW is associate professor of political science at the City College of New York and the City University Graduate Center. His third book, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, was published by William Morrow & Co. this past fall.

JAN GROSS is associate professor of sociology at Emory University.

ROBERT KUTTNER is a contributing editor of the *New Republic* and author of *The Economic Illusion*.

ROBERTA LYNCH is a labor union policy analyst and writes frequently about social policy and women and labor.

ROY MEDVEDEV is a distinguished Russian historian and political dissident. He is the author of *Let History Judge*.

BRIAN MORTON works for *Dissent* and with this issue assumes editorial responsibility for the new *In the Magazines* section.

DESMOND MORTON is the author of seventeen books on Canadian political, military, and labor history. He is currently principal of the Mississauga campus of the University of Toronto.

DAVID NASAW teaches history at the College of Staten Island (CUNY). His latest book is *Children of the City at Work and at Play*.

GEORGE PACKER's essays and reviews have appeared in *Dissent*, the *Nation*, the *Boston Review* and elsewhere.

LINDA A. RABBEN is an anthropologist and teacher in the Latin American studies program of the University of Iowa. She is currently working on a book about Brazilian women.

JIM SLEEPER is editing a special issue of *Dissent* on New York City.

GERALD SORIN is chair of the history department, SUNY, New Paltz and the author of two books on abolitionism. □

DISSENT (ISSN 0012-3846), issued January 1, 1987, is published quarterly, winter, spring, summer, and fall, by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc., 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Subscriptions: $15.00 for one year; $27.00 for two years; $10.00 for students for one year; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, add $4.00 for mailing costs per year; institutional rate $21.00 per year, $37.00 for two years, single copy $4.00. All payments from foreign countries must be made by United States money orders or checks payable in United States currency. Single copy, $4.00. For special rates on bulk orders from organizations, teachers, etc., write directly to DISSENT. For information on newsstand and bookstore distribution write to: Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, Ohio 44870.

© 1986 by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc. (FSISI). Permission to reprint any article must be obtained from the publishers. • Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. • Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. • Volume 34, Number 1 (whole No. 144).

• DISSENT does not engage in lobbying or support candidates or legislation.

Front Cover Design by Robert Schwartz.

DISSENT is indexed in the *PAIS Bulletin*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Erazim Kohák

The Relevance of Tolstoy

Or Europe After Chernobyl

We were thinking of how to lead off our "Comments and Opinions" section for this issue, when this letter from one of our editorial board members came in. In its provocative lucidity, it seemed just what was needed.—EDS.

Though the headlines may tell another story, to anyone living in Vienna the most remarkable thing about Europe after Chernobyl is how most remarkably like Europe before Chernobyl it is. In the direct aftermath of the accident, Austria did join in the embargo on Soviet bloc produce, but that expired soon enough. A month later, the markets in Vienna overflowed once more with Polish hams, Hungarian poultry and, best of all, those fabulous Bulgarian vegetables. Chernobyl certainly made the point that vegetarianism in Vienna is almost totally dependent on Bulgarian exports.

That seems to be about the only point it did make. The Soviets and their central European clients are again assuring us that nuclear power plants are perfectly safe, including the one just across the border in Czechoslovakia, perhaps forty miles from Vienna as the cloud drifts. They fully intend to press on with their nuclear power program. So, no less vocally, do the French—and while the Germans are rather less vocal about it, they did dismiss out of hand Austrian protests against the nuclear facility they are building just across the border near Salzburg. We have had our foretaste of the apocalypse and, unless Viennese vegetarians are laying in a stock of dried vegetables, have decided to do nothing about it. Whatever the risks of nuclear power, we are too committed to ever-growing energy consumption to do without it.

NO, THAT IS NOT CYNICISM. The "friendship cloud," as the Poles called it, did bring home both the risks and the unreality of frontiers in a nuclear age. Last June, Austrian antinuclear activists carried their protest not only to West Germany, where demonstrations are fun and reasonably free of risk, but to Hungary and even to Czechoslovakia, currently central Europe's most stringently policed state. Some two dozen of them crossed the border with briefcases full of leaflets and, at an appointed hour, began to hand them out in several major cities, as if this were the West. They were, of course, promptly detained and shipped back to Austria; yet their gesture, however futile, gave proof of their earnestness.

An agreement signed in Vienna the same weekend, providing Austrian funding for a Czechoslovak-Hungarian hydroelectric project at Nagymáros, brought home the futility of that earnestness. Originally, the Austrians had planned to build their own hydroelectric facility at Hainburg, to make up for the nuclear reactor at Zwettendorf shut down by a popular referendum before it ever produced a single kilowatt. The Hainburg project would have been such an ecological disaster that, in a spontaneous upheaval rare in this well-disciplined country, thousands of protesters descended on Hainburg and placed their bodies between the bulldozers and the threatened wetlands. Since Austria is also a consensus society, the government backed down.

Unfortunately, the protest did not change the realities of energy consumption. This, finally, is a society whose vision of the good life, like the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American, is still defined in terms of major appliances. Blocked by protest but pressed by demand, the Austrian government agreed to finance an even more destructive project a bit downriver, on Hungarian territory, the vast loan to be repaid in electricity over the next twenty years. Since the possibilities of protest in the Soviet bloc are somewhat limited, ecology-minded Hungarians appealed to their Austrian counterparts to protest the funding, though in vain. The Austrians love their woods and Alpine streams, but, like the Americans, they love their energy-guzzling gewgaws no less. Though the ecological movement would like to present it as such, the issue is no longer one of a straightforward confrontation between Good and Evil. Far more, it is one of the ambiguity of our commitments.

That recognition, to be sure, may represent no change in fact but it does represent a significant shift in perception. Central Europeans have always had a passion for seeing the world in well-defined blacks and whites. The prereflective image of reality at the back of our minds, after all, has not been shaped by Shakespeare's bucolic vision of an Elizabethan England but by Goethe's Faust, the product of a much later age when the forces shaping modernity already loomed on the horizon. *Faust I* presents a vision of modern man on the threshold of modernity, tempted by the forces about to transform the world but, in the best romantic tradition, redeemed by the love of a maiden fair. In *Part II*, having mastered the forces of science and technology, Goethe's Faust becomes a Prospero, transforming rude nature in the image of reason. There is little ambiguity as to what is good and what evil, and little to prepare us for an age in which Prospero's art itself becomes ambiguous. We need a *Faust, Part III*, that would present an image of modern man on the far side of modernity.

THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT VACLAV HAVEL, the Czech dissident playwright who has already served over four years in jail for his views, offers us in his retelling of the Faustian legend. Havel has already written a number of successful plays dealing with the dilemma of a person seeking to preserve personal integrity—to "live in truth"—in face of the demands of conformity. In the opening scenes of *Temptation,* which had its première at Vienna's *Akademie theater* a month after Chernobyl, that seems to be the theme as well. Havel's Faust—Dr. Foustka, an academician employed in a prestigious institute charged with safeguarding the objective purity of the "scientific world view"—secretly dabbles in the occult and turns Gretchen's head with an impassioned confession of a religious perspective. So far, so good.

Then come the surprises. Mephisto, in Havel's version a limping pensioner named Fistula, shows no interest in Foustka's soul. Instead, he offers Foustka his services on the condition that, should it be needed, Foustka would testify that even Mephisto had secretly served the cause of science all along. In turn, Mephisto/Fistula offers to testify, should that be needed, that Foustka had secretly worked with the forces of the occult all along.

It soon becomes obvious why Fistula shows no interest in Foustka's soul: Foustka has none worth having. Accused of religious sympathies at the institute, Foustka denies them vehemently. Gretchen, who vowed to go to destruction with him in the name of truth, goes to it alone: Foustka earns a commendation. To his superiors at the institute, he presents his dealings with Mephisto as a strategic ruse. To the indignant Mephisto, he presents his ploy at the institute as a ruse. Foustka is not a man seeking to defend his soul against a deforming lie. He has no soul. He is truly a postmodern man, an upwardly mobile, perennial survivor who sidles up eagerly to anyone who seems to offer an advantage while committing himself to nothing.

The ending is as effective as it is unexpected. Having carefully avoided the risk of commitment, Foustka is disowned by both sides, which prove to be the same: Mephisto is an *agent provocateur*. Damned by his contradictory lies that were not even lies, just statements appropriate to this or that situation, Foustka goes up in flames. Havel remains an idealist, convinced that the cost of commitment can and must be borne. However, it is less his conclusion than his analysis of the predicament of modernity that makes the play such a powerful universal metaphor. Goethe showed man on the threshold of the modern age, tentatively reaching out for what it seemed to offer. Havel shows him at the other end, neither captured by the Prince of Lies nor redeemed by Gretchen's love, just reduced to the banality of a survival to which he has vainly sacrificed the very distinction between a lie and a truth.

That is the predicament. In our ambiguous commitment to both ecology and consumerism, we have not sold our soul to the devil. We have no soul to sell, having lost it, without even noticing it, in one compromise after another.

Havel's imagery is often distinctively central European—an English translator might well want

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

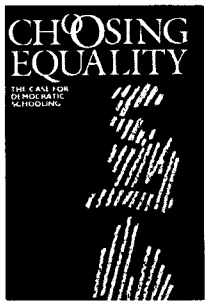
to transform the "scientific institute" into a business corporation—yet the metaphor is universal. Like Goethe's before him, it speaks not just of individuals but of the condition of a civilization that has lost a clear vision of good and evil and, lacking a standard for choosing, seeks to please all sides. Yes, we must save our environment—but of course we must also consume ever more energy. We must seek peace—but of course we must build ever more powerful weapons. That is no longer just a crisis of policy. It is a truly Faustian crisis, a crisis of reason.

Reason, after all, has been the cornerstone of European civilization through all these millennia—not reason in the trivial modern sense of dispassioned manipulation but in the profound sense of responsible choices in clear understanding. It was Europe's decision to stand out of the unreflecting lockstep of nature and tradition and to chart a course in the light of reason that has made its cultural tradition distinctive. It has led it to such audacious visions as that of equality, rejecting slavery, perhaps the most universal of human institutions. It has led it to the no less audacious vision of social justice, the conviction that human poverty and drudgery, long the perennial human condition, can be eliminated by purposive effort. Critical reason, willing to challenge both nature and tradition in the name of a moral vision, has been the basis of Europe's greatness.

In recent centuries, though, that reason seems to have done rather better at teaching us how to accomplish our ends than what those ends should be. That, after all, is the dilemma of Havel's Faust. He is quite clever, really, at manipulating the world around him yet seems to have lost any vision of what the purpose of it all might be. Lacking that, he falls back on his own well-being as the one measure of success and failure, acting out the modern corruption of the sophist claim adopted by the Renaissance, that "man is the measure of all things." For Havel's Faust, as for our entire civilization, the gratification of individual greed becomes the measure and justification of all his and our doings.

More than anything else, that is what increasingly stands out all around us. We live in an anthropocentric universe in which not love or justice but individual well-being, reduced to ever increasing material consumption, has become the sole justification for all we do. Once upon a time, we were wont to consider that a hallmark of capitalism, and looked to socialism for a nobler vision.

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY PRESS



CHOOSING EQUALITY
The Case for Democratic Schooling
Ann Bastian, Norm Fruchter, Marilyn Gittell, Colin Greer, and Kenneth Haskins
Foreword by James P. Comer

"I know of no treatise that more boldly exposes the most acute problems today confronting American education. **Choosing Equality** resonates with a call for a national declaration of inter-dependence, for full recognition that if our public schools are to serve any child well, they must serve all children well. The message is compelling, the augmentation incisive, the authors' socio-political agenda deserving of the studious attention of all who care about the future our children will inherit."—Mary Hatwood Futrell, President, NEA $22.95

THE REGULATION OF SEXUALITY
Experiences of Family Planning Workers
Carole Joffe

A unique approach to the debate over abortion and birth control, this book lets the reader in on the dilemmas and frustrations faced on a daily basis by counselors involved in the delivery of these services. ". . . an interesting work."—Faye Wattleton, President, Planned Parenthood
Health, Society, and Policy Series $24.95

THE FALSE PROMISE OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM
Implementing Quality Control in Welfare
Evelyn Z. Brodkin

. . . an important contribution to the fields of political science and public administration."—Frank Fischer, author of **Critical Perspectives on Organization and Bureaucracy.** $29.95

At bookstores or
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Broad & Oxford Sts. • Philadelphia 19122

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Today, that distinction has faded. On a flea-market table in Vienna, I saw two military daggers, one inscribed "Meine Ehre heisst Treue," the other "Arbeit adelt," recalling the warring factions, fascist and socialist, of half a century ago. Today, those two daggers look very much alike. So, for all the crucial differences, do the societies that describe themselves as "capitalist" and as "real socialist." The differences are tremendous, to be sure: one, committed to individual freedom, preserves the hope of change, the other, committed to regimentation, makes change most unlikely. Yet both share a common conviction—that ever increasing material consumption is the ultimate goal and measure of all we do. In that respect, their sole disagreement is whether a market economy or a plan-directed one is likely to produce greater individual consumption.

That is the weakness of European socialism today—of democratic socialism no less than of the barracks counterfeit prevailing east of the Elbe. For, given that shared assumption, the answer is obvious: the classic liberal combination of a nonrestrictive government with unrestricted private enterprise offers by far the most effective combination for the most ruthless exploitation of natural resources and ever-mounting individual affluence. If socialism has no nobler vision to offer, only a problematic alternative strategy in the service of the same shabby goal, it can arouse little enthusiasm.

GIVEN ITS EXPERIENCE WITH COMMUNISM, the European socialist movement has reason to be extremely wary of grand visions. Socialist and social democratic leaders are anxious to reassure the voters that they do not intend to threaten the industrial goose that lays such gratifying golden eggs as washing machines, automobiles, and color televisions with videocassette recorders. Ever since the trauma of the Bolshevik revolution, the socialists have cautiously offered a more equitable distribution of such golden eggs or better conditions in their production, but no grand visions. The heirs of the Bolsheviks who, a generation ago, paid at least lip service to an alternative vision, have swung into line as well. Though Gorbachev has not revived Khrushchev's slogan about "catching up to and surpassing" the capitalists, his policy is clearly aimed at building not socialism but an authoritarian consumerism. Budapest today is little different from Vienna, only a bit shabbier. And, for anyone harboring residual illusions, so is Prague: all that remains of the old rhetoric is massive repression. Over it all lies the blanket of consensus: consumerism, ever greater, ever more wasteful, ever more ostentatious individual consumption, is what life is all about.

Hence the Faustian dilemma—for it is precisely this anthropocentric vision of the universe, combined with a materialist conception of humanity, that has set us on the road to Chernobyl, a road on which only an ecological catastrophe might forestall a nuclear one. The problem is not political or even economic in any conventional sense. It is, rather, a philosophical or perhaps a prephilosophical one, having to do with the way we prereflectively perceive our world and our place in it. As long as we remain convinced, at the deepest level of our minds, that we, individual consumers, are the center and the measure of all that is, and that the world, including our fellow creatures and possibly our fellow humans of certain creeds or races, is no more than a store of raw materials for gratifying our whims, there is no solution. Given a limitless consumption, there is no alternative to nuclear energy—and given nuclear energy, there is no alternative to disaster.

That is why such glimmers of hope as there may be come today from unconventional sources, such as the visibly growing ecological consciousness among the young. No, not from Germany's notorious "Greens"—they have become far too politicized and shrill to recognize that the problem is not capitalism or America but rather the materialist anthropocentrism which they, no less than the Soviet Union, act out. The hope is, rather, the unspectacular recognition that humans are not the center of all meaning and the source of all value—and that material consumption is not all that being human is about. Perhaps the schoolchildren acquiring a new ecological consciousness will some day be capable of what their elders can hardly imagine—substituting, for the vision of man the master, a vision of the peaceable kingdom, a world in which all creation living together in peace and respect constitutes a higher norm and a nobler goal than the gratification of individual greed.

THAT, FINALLY, IS THE RELEVANCE OF TOLSTOY. He is easy to criticize—the count toiling alongside his peasants but making no attempt to improve their lot, preaching poverty on a fabulous unearned income and nonviolence from the safety of privilege sustained by one of history's more violent regimes. Yet Tolstoy has something more basic to offer—a vision that displaces humans from the place of privilege they have arrogated ever since

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

God was said to have vacated it. Though his particular images may be as dated and as local as Havel's, his vision is not. It is the vision of humans not as conquering masters but as stewards, living in peace and respect with all of the creation. Granted, that is hardly a spectacular political program. Yet what made political programs spectacular in the past was that they invariably offered to humans an even greater pride of place, whether individually or collectively, whether in the service of a nation or a church or, ultimately, of individual greed. Perhaps what we need today is precisely an unspectacular program, one that could help us retreat from the untenable arrogance of anthropocentrism.

Europe and the world after Chernobyl will remain most remarkably like Europe and the world before Chernobyl as long as the assumption that consumption is central to being human remains unchallenged. That assumption is deeply rooted in all of us, in those who possess affluence as well as those who merely envy it from afar, and it is reinforced daily by what the Americans boast about and the Soviets wish for. Yet that assumption has led us to a dead end. Perhaps we need to listen to a different America, that of Thoreau and Emerson, and to a different Russia, that of Tolstoy. We need to hear a different drummer. I do not know whether we are still capable of it. I would only note that Havel's latter-day Faust, incapable of hearing those other voices, goes up in flames. □

Jim Sleeper

Profiting from Public Squalor

Virtually every column I've read on New York City's unfolding municipal corruption scandals seeks salvation in greater citizen vigilance and participation in public life. A prosecutor warns that only an aroused electorate can wrest reform from foot-dragging politicians. A senator insists that political party life must be made more rewarding, not less, if "serious people" are to give time to it. A public relations consultant wonders how we can inspire people "to care."

The ultimate guarantor of good government, our governors are agreed, is the governed. So saying, they end their columns precisely where the discussion should begin.

Why don't "we" care? Why the apparent public apathy and resignation about the continuing disclosures? One wonders whether the professionals really want to know. For the answer strikes at the heart of arrangements they've always accepted in pursuing their careers. Corruption on the scale now emerging is the fruit of their—and our—unexamined view of the public sector as a stepchild and whipping boy of the larger private economy, a view that makes public malfeasance all but inevitable.

Long before "sting" operations begin, we in effect "set up" politicians for corruption by asking them to govern in the twilight zone between what John Kenneth Galbraith calls the "private affluence and public squalor" of our civic life. We expect them to remain pure while mediating the inherently exploitative relationships between, say, senior citizens waiting in the cold for buses that don't come, and wealthy schemers who not only don't pay their fair share of taxes for those buses, but also siphon off what tax base there is into the contracts, fees, and commissions that build luxury housing, grand prix race tracks, and other dubious "public" works.

Some of these deals do spur needed development, but often they merely drain the public sector of resources for the basic services without which no polity or economy can flourish for long. Most of the pillaging is legal precisely because politicians craft the tax breaks and contracts that facilitate it. But it creates the climate within which outright corruption occurs, because at some level, I'm convinced, it demoralizes both politicians and the public, making them cynical, even bitter. I believe this is the story of men like the late Queens Borough president and Democratic party boss Donald Manes, who committed suicide as the scandals broke, and Bronx Democratic boss Stanley Friedman,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who has been convicted of some offenses but did much of his "siphoning" *within* the letter of the law.

It begins so simply; a newly elected reform legislator quickly learns from his majority leader or county party leader that he'd better vote for some questionable bond issue or tax code provision if he expects to get anything else done. Tainted thus from the outset by such legal accommodations to public squalor, the politician discerns no obvious moral or civic reason for turning down a few "extralegal" compensations for his tough life in the twilight zone.

True, in return for his "accommodations," a politician gets the contributions and patronage he needs to build machines that can isolate and put down any pillagers or grass-roots rebels who fail to court him. The power to do that is politics' chief attraction to many of its ablest practitioners, like Manes and Friedman.

But the campaign contributions often come wrapped in the subtle contempt of patrons far wealthier than the recipient. And there is the not so subtle contempt of ordinary citizens hard-pressed by the decay of public services upon which they have every right to depend.

For all his apparent power, then, a politician feels squeezed between two kinds of contempt. Thus reinforced in his view that "everyone else" views his public service as a means to their own

BY HIS RECORD . . .

The Case Against William Rehnquist

With more rancor and opposition than is usually the case in such situations—but, alas, not enough to sway the Senate majority—William H. Rehnquist was confirmed as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Given his appalling record this remains a matter of great concern. How much so was presented in extensive detail in a report prepared by Elaine R. Jones and Eric Schnapper of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund for the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. Their report on Rehnquist's "Judicial Record" was accompanied by a devastating memorandum subtitled "A 35 Year History of Hostility to Victims of Discrimination and Unanswered Questions of Candor and Sense of Propriety." We do not have the space to reprint either the report or the memorandum, but we present below a condensation, a bill of particulars that was with the report. Copies of the report and memorandum can be obtained from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, 806 Fifteenth St., N.W., Suite 940, Washington, D.C. 20005.

A comprehensive analysis of the opinions and votes of Justice Rehnquist demonstrates that he is an extremist without parallel in American judicial history.

- In 120 of the 124 cases in which Rehnquist cast the deciding vote, Rehnquist voted not to enforce the Bill of Rights.
- In 80 of 83 cases in which the Supreme Court disagreed about the application or interpretation of a civil rights statute, Rehnquist voted against enforcing the law, or for the narrowest possible interpretation of the statute.
- In every race-discrimination case in which Rehnquist cast the deciding vote, he voted against the black complainant.

Justice Rehnquist is the only member of the Supreme Court who believes that it is constitutional for the government:

- to aid organized religious organizations for the purpose of encouraging religion
- to direct that certain people cannot get married without government approval of the wedding
- to suppress speech by a corporation or organization because government officials disagree with their views
- to sentence a man to death based on secret evidence.

Justice Rehnquist is the only member of the Supreme Court who believes that:

- it is legal to give tax exemptions to segregated private schools that practice racial discrimination
- it is legal for an employer to fire a worker over age 40 because the worker has too much experience
- the Occupational Safety and Health Act is unconstitutional. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

private ends, the politician may wonder why he alone should remain virtuous. "Where's my cut?" is the inevitable, if muted, cry.

So HE STEALS; or he invents public lotteries to restore some of the lost service revenue by playing upon the escapist fantasies of the deprived; and the increasingly alienated citizenry turns to tax evasion, organized and unorganized crime, drugs, and wild cards like the candidates of Lyndon LaRouche.

There is only one long-run solution to this general rout of civic virtue; stop feeding private affluence through public squalor; stop the legal siphoning of the tax base for private gain unconnected to essential public purposes. End the widespread perception that the commonweal is open to legal plunder by the highest bidder, and you begin to curb the resentments that rationalize corruption.

Tighter contract provisions and campaign finance reforms are important steps—and it is both telling and troubling that Governor Mario Cuomo and the Republican-controlled State Senate failed to push for them this past year. But by themselves they won't shield the body politic from the predatory relations in which politicians and cynical voters have been amply schooled. Without reform more systemic than anything the professionals have proposed, the wonder isn't that some public officials succumb to temptation, or leave public life, or crack under the pressure; the wonder is that more of them don't. □

James B. Rule

The "War Against Porn"—Again

Having failed at reducing unemployment, reviving the Middle East peace process, stopping the burgeoning national debt and controlling the arms race, the Reagan administration has evidently decided to take on something it can handle: pornography. Last summer, to much fanfare, Attorney General Meese accepted with relish the report of his Commission on Pornography.

When it comes to advisory reports commissioned by policymakers, one gets what one pays for. Well, almost. In this case, two panelists bolted rather than support some of the commission's less credible conclusions. In sharp contrast to the more intellectually weighty efforts of a federal advisory panel on the same subject back in 1970, this report finds pornography not only an abomination but indeed a clear and present danger. Its ninety-two recommendations range from making it a crime to employ others for live sex performances to prohibiting pornographic transmissions by telephone or cable.

The immediate reactions could have been predicted: congratulations and chest-thumping from Jerry Falwell, nervous applause from those strange bedpartners in the antiporn wing of the women's movement, commercially calculated outrage from the publishers of *Playboy* and other dermatologically oriented periodicals, and well-founded anxiety from civil libertarians. Yet the immediate policy effects of the report seem negligible. Most of the recommendations would take months if not years to implement, and it is far from clear that this administration will apply the political muscle needed to this end.

In the longer run, one has to wonder about pornography and its place in public life. Is porn necessarily a sign of special moral weakness? Does it really do damage commensurate with the revulsion that some of it inspires? And when it is a moral evil, how evil should it be before warranting state coercion against those who produce or consume it?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For authentic democrats, these are always tough questions. In matters of political speech, the case is clearer. We seek protection for expressions of revolting beliefs, in hopes that the same safeguards will protect unpopular but enlightening ideas. Yet we stretch a point to expect much enlightenment from pornography. Even those most determined to protect it have a hard time convincing us that dirty books, movies, pictures, and the like are a source of life-giving ideas that we couldn't find elsewhere. The virtues of not interfering with pornography are largely negative virtues—the virtues of not minding others' business, and of not creating state machinery that could well end up minding *our* business in matters quite unrelated to pornography.

And one does proceed with caution when attacking something that many people seem to like, at least in moderate doses. From the tedious pages of this plodding document, one lucid observation from the two dissenting panelists, Judith Becker and Ellen Levine, leaps to the eye:

> . . . it was hard enough to find witnesses willing to speak out about their negative experiences with pornography. To find people willing to acknowledge their personal consumption of erotic and pornographic materials and comment favorably about their use has been nearly impossible. Since such material is selling to millions of apparently satisfied customers, it seems obvious that the data gathered (in the commission's inquiries) is not well balanced.

By analogy, junk food may be disagreeable to contemplate and harmful in public health terms. But does that warrant stopping people from producing or eating it? Again, when are the evils of porn evil enough to justify suppression?

When they hurt those who can't protect themselves, one stock answer has it. That's fine as far as it goes. But many social arrangements—from expressways to vaccination programs—offer the possibility of harm to innocent bystanders, without anyone's suggesting that they be suppressed. Presumably risks must be quite marked and potential victims quite unable to look out for themselves before we start curtailing private pursuits, even bizarre or unedifying ones.

Meese's pornography commissioners took great pains to show that pornography does indeed hurt the helpless. The violent sorts of pornography are indeed on the upsurge, the majority of the commission assure us. And the spectacle of women and children subject to the sadistic lusts of men surely encourages action on such sadistic desires by consumers of pornography. In fact, both these assertions are diabolically difficult to substantiate through any kind of dispassionate research. We have no reliable census of all pornography, for example, against which to measure the proportion of any one type. Nor do any credible research techniques enable us to specify precisely the role played by pornography when a consumer of it carries out sexual aggression. A number of academic researchers protested the commission's interpretations of their studies to buttress naive, hasty conclusions on the effects of porn in such contexts.

SOMETIMES THE FACT OF VICTIMIZATION and the helplessness of the victims are plain. Hardly anyone defends the involvement of children in pornography. But what about other kinds of harm? Here it is hard to believe that porn in itself has caused suffering remotely comparable to the Reagan administration's curtailment of occupational safety enforcement, its actions against aid to dependent children, or its quiet efforts to condone racism and job discrimination. Pornography may thrive in all sorts of broader social conditions that are only too familiar—the high rates of unemployment, the built-in disadvantages women face in the labor market, or the fact of widespread male domination in a variety of spheres. But these are conditions that the Reagan administration has accepted or encouraged, rather than attacked.

And so, back to politics. Does this administration really care about pornography? Do its elite strategists consider the commission's recommendations remotely as important, say, as resisting social justice in Chile or South Africa, or fattening the military budget, or getting its big business supporters off the hook from environmental regulations? To ask such questions is to answer them. The porn commissioners logged a year's work in an effort funded to the tune of half a million dollars—less than the cost of two *hours* of Star Wars research. Small potatoes indeed!

The Reagan administration's war on porn is simply the domestic equivalent of its invasion of Grenada. And yet this and other on-the-cheap domestic posturings perform an important role in its larger political strategy. Like its stands on abortion, prayer in the public schools, and other "traditional values" issues, the administration's war on porn plays to a very important gallery. That is the constituency of millions of bewildered folk who sense themselves being swept along by big forces in an increasingly cynical America, and who know that no one has asked them how they feel about where these changes are leading.

The sociologist Murray Straus, an eminent researcher on family violence, has objected in par-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ticularly telling terms to the thesis that pornography causes rape: "[I]f one is concerned with the effects of media on rape," he writes, "the problem lies with the prevalence of violence in the media, not sex in the media." Now here is an authentic objective for any administration really concerned with the moral well-being of our nation's children—curtailing the diet of violence served up to them for hours a day via the ubiquitous household box. Here, as Straus suggests, we have much stronger evidence of palpable bad effects. But of course any efforts against *this* kind of moral evil would strike at a major sector of big business.

Don't hold your breath waiting for that kind of action from this administration. Attacking porn brings far greater political dividends. □

Joseph Clark

Reykjavik: Beginning of the End of Reaganism!

The Reykjavik summit may have been a failure—as the demeanor of its participants clearly indicated when it was over; or, it may have been a tremendous success—after the participants reconsidered their Icelandic labors twenty-four hours later, both here and in Moscow. But the subsequent Vienna meeting of the secretary of state and the Soviet foreign minister underlined the failure and reiterated the obstacle—call it Star Wars or Strategic Defense Initiative.

One major conclusion can be drawn: Nuclear arms reduction and the elimination of nuclear arms have returned to the center of world affairs; they stand where they belong—at the top of the world agenda. Arranged hastily, the Icelandic meeting was significant for its timing—three weeks before the U.S. elections. Gorbachev knew his adversary far better than Reagan knew his; Gorbachev knew what a political animal he was dealing with at a moment when Reagan was more than anxious to impress the electorate (and Nancy, too, it is said) with his devotion to nuclear disarmament and world peace. As a matter of record, Georgi Arbatov, a top Soviet American-affairs expert, appearing on American television, said the Soviets were only too happy to help Reagan assume the role of peacenik. Though my favorite American historian, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., thinks the next switch of the American historical cycle is not due till the 1990s, the Democratic sweep of the Senate and House can well be the harbinger of a decisive turn away from the philosophy of greed as the ultimate arbiter of all economic matters, and a nuclear arms race as the basis of foreign policy.

On reflection it may be that Reaganism produced an earlier sign—about three years ago—that it had attained its zenith and was about to begin its historical descent. Upon his election in 1980 and till 1983, a fundamental tenet of pure and unadulterated Reaganite foreign policy was the striving for nuclear arms supremacy; its corollary, that we cannot make deals with the Evil Empire; and even more terrifying, that nuclear wars can be fought and won. (Reagan was an early convert to the fundamentalist mumbo jumbo about the inevitability of Armageddon, and he affirmed it on several occasions.) This view promised humankind a straightforward march to oblivion; but it could not withstand the sentiments of people everywhere, even in the darkest and farthest reaches of geography and politics. Never had people pronounced a more decisive veto than this one—that a nuclear war must never be fought. Finally, in his third year of office, Reagan responded, declaring and repeating what most had known for a long time: that no one, no power in the world can win a nuclear war. But Reagan produced a kicker to go with that avowal—Star Wars.

Reagan's turnabout on the "no win" aspect of nuclear conflict came after western Europe was swept by antinuclear movements and demonstrations; after an amazing demonstration in New York's Central Park brought together the largest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rally this city had ever seen, some three-quarters of a million people; after members of both House and Senate indicated they would vote for a moratorium on nuclear bomb testing; after films, books, stories, and articles impressed the world with the total devastation that would follow a nuclear conflict. (With respect to the latter, some of those who criticized descriptions of the dire consequences of nuclear war have been unfair and irrelevant; whether *all* life, or "just" *most* life will be extinguished, doesn't matter that much. It was also noteworthy that interviews with Russian school children revealed that they too feared the destruction of all life in the event of a nuclear war; this despite those Soviet military experts who are still being quoted by their counterparts in this country as believing that nuclear wars can be fought and won.)

WHEN REAGAN FINALLY DISAVOWED the possibility of winning a nuclear war he was following in the footsteps of a hero of his, General Douglas MacArthur. The general had urged the use of nuclear weapons in the Korean War, but by the time of his seventy-fifth birthday in 1955, he traveled to Los Angeles to tell an American Legion banquet that neither the Soviet Union nor the United States could win a nuclear war. "If you lose, you are annihilated. If you win, you stand only to lose. No longer does it possess the chance of a winner of a duel—it contains rather the germs of double suicide," he told the astonished Legionnaires. The one issue that can be settled between the Communists and the United States, MacArthur lectured the veterans, is that of war in the nuclear age.

Electioneering Efforts

REAGAN'S TURNABOUT ON THE MATTER of winning a nuclear war was accompanied by his discovery of a new panacea, Star Wars or the Strategic Defense Initiative. Justified criticism has been leveled against the conduct of the recent congressional elections because of the mud-slinging and in many instances because candidates failed to discuss the real issues. This obscured the fact that real issues *were* in the center of the campaign, and these included the nuclear arms race and disarmament. The outcome of most of the senatorial races was influenced in part by this issue even though local economics often overshadowed other considerations.

Much has been made, and properly so, of the impact, or lack of impact, of Reagan's whirlwind electioneering tour in all the major senatorial races. Not enough has been noted of the extraordinary lengths to which he went in the weeks before November 4 to influence the outcome of these senatorial campaigns. He made a deal to subsidize wheat sales to the Evil Empire so that it could buy bread cheaper than we do. He upped farm subsidies to levels demanded by farm-state Democrats, the highest in history. He made a deal with Japan for a drop in its interest rates in order to get our stock market moving upward. He made deals with the Iranian terrorists for release of a few American hostages, while warning our allies and the Arab states not to dare negotiate with Iranian terrorists. And now we are experiencing an unprecedented development—widespread disillusionment with Reagan and Reaganism because of the secret deals with Iran to swap arms for hostages.

The biggest ploy of all was the summit at Reykjavik, after the president had solemnly promised not to stage a summit before the elections. He got around that one by officially declaring that the meeting of the two people at the summit of their respective governments—was not a summit. The alacrity with which Reagan accepted Gorbachev's invitation was surely evidence that the nuclear arms race would become an important issue in the senatorial campaigns.

To put the matter more sharply: the Boston-based Council for a Livable World conducted a nationwide effort in behalf of nuclear disarmament and it endorsed seventeen Democratic senatorial candidates who supported this position. Thirteen

Dissent Power!

The charge of speculative and unplanned overbuilding leveled against the real-estate industry in New York is a constant theme, running from Daniel M. Friedenberg's piece in the 1961 "New York, N.Y." issue of the socialist journal *Dissent* to the current populist campaign against gentrification and new luxury condominiums. Similarly, the past twenty-five years have been full of the demand for the elimination of private driving from Manhattan; there is a straight line connecting Percival and Paul Goodman's impassioned plea for such a ban in the very same issue of *Dissent* with the now successful fight against the Westway super-highway project.

SAMUEL LIPMAN, *The New Criterion*, SUMMER 1986 □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were victorious after Reagan campaigned in almost all their states, putting his emphasis on Star Wars and condemning the Democrats for not supporting it. The Council also endorsed fifty-one House candidates, of whom thirty-three won. Jerome Grossman, executive officer of the Council, points out that in Colorado the senatorial race was a referendum on nuclear disarmament. Almost everywhere the Republicans outspent the Democrats many times over, but the one-and-a-half million dollars that the Council raised and contributed to these candidates was apparently better spent.

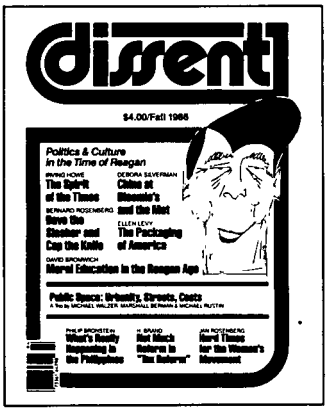
In his haste to meet with Gorbachev before the elections, Reagan revealed a capacity for bumbling and confusion that seemed, in a perverse sort of way, destined to make Gorbachev look much better. The lack of preparation by "our side" was indicated by the surprise and confusion of the president when the Soviets made their proposals. One of the best-informed Washington correspondents, Lars-Erik Nelson of the *New York Daily News*, compared Reagan at Reykjavik to Columbus: he didn't know where he was going; when he got there he didn't know where he was; and when he returned he didn't know where he had been.

REAGAN CAME BACK AND IN HIS ELECTION barnstorming gave as many as four differing versions of what he and Gorbachev had agreed to before the meeting broke up over Star Wars. After much denial there was finally an admission that Reagan and Gorbachev had indeed agreed that in the second five-year period of nuclear arms reduction the aim would be to get rid of all, emphasis on *all*, strategic nuclear arms, not just ballistic missiles.

Off-the-Mark Criticism

AT THIS POINT THE SADDEST RESULT of the Reykjavik meeting is that so much of the comment, even from persons of good will who would ordinarily be on the side of nuclear disarmament, has been critical of the "utopian" goals that were discussed and even agreed upon at the meeting. George F. Kennan, for example, who was the first to make the proposal for a 50 percent reduction of nuclear arms, joined with reputable colleagues to urge that Reagan be supported in his position on Star Wars. If anything is clear from all that happened before, during, and after Reykjavik, it is that Star Wars is the single major obstacle standing in the way of nuclear arms reduction. That Reagan is using it with all deliberation as a means of blocking real progress on the issue is indicated by the efforts to kill SALT II.

The administration would like to dump the



Special Fall Issue

Sold Out—and Reprinted

- All about greed, and glitz, and graft
- All about Bloomingdale's and the Metropolitan Museum
- All about David Stockman's delusions
- All about the television world of Reagan youth
- All about much more

Contributors: Irving Howe, Debora Silverman, David Bromwich, *. . . and more.*

* * *

Also: A special section on "Public Space," with articles by Michael Walzer, Michael Rustin, Marshall Berman.

* * *

At newsstands, bookstores, or send $4 (no billing) to:

DISSENT
521 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SALT II agreement, after years of adherence, by deploying a 131st cruise missile-carrying B-52 bomber. This would be in direct violation of the SALT II agreement. As Paul Warnke wrote recently, "We cannot facilitate new agreements by throwing out old ones. We cannot reduce existing limits by scrapping them. We cannot move toward a safer world by shooting SALT between the eyes and ourselves in the foot." □

This issue of Dissent *was prepared before the news broke of the Reaganite-Iran scandal. We'll get to it next time.* —*EDS.*

Peter Connolly

Blacks & White Liberals—a New Relationship

All available signs indicate that Jesse Jackson will again run for the presidency in 1988. A prominent feature of his second candidacy will probably be implicit or explicit threats to bolt the Democratic party and run as an independent in the general election if the "rainbow coalition" does not receive "fair" treatment from the party's leaders in the primary campaign.

Democratic leaders, who know that black voters are an indispensable part of any conceivable Democratic majority coalition, will no doubt take such threats seriously, in purely electoral terms. But unless comparable intellectual efforts are made, over the next two years, to understand why an independent black candidacy has become a credible idea and reasonable measures are adopted to meet legitimate black concerns, it is probable that no eleventh-hour attempts at conciliation in 1988 will head off an independent Jackson candidacy or prevent millions of disaffected black and some white Democrats from voting for him.

What follows is a preliminary attempt (by a white Democrat whose politics are closer to Lane Kirkland's than to Jesse Jackson's) to grasp the significance of the recent evolution of black politics and to sketch out what I consider to be the new obligations which that evolution will impose on white and black Democrats if the party is to be kept together and have a fighting chance in 1988.

For white liberal Democrats, political 1984 was a year that began in hope and ended in disaster. But for blacks, 1984 was much more than that. It was the year when an articulate black man ran for president, won millions of primary votes and hundreds of delegates, outlasted the majority of other candidates, commanded the attention of the world, and, at the Democratic convention, delivered a riveting speech that made those of Walter Mondale and Gary Hart look anemic by comparison. For blacks, of whatever political outlook, the Jackson candidacy has become a shining moment, something to look back on with pride.

Even more important, the 1984 Jackson candidacy may well have changed forever the image of the ideal black political leader in the minds of blacks. Unlike his predecessors, Jackson did not seek accommodation and incremental change within the white political structure. Instead, he defied it, or at least seemed to defy it; and it was that message of defiance that gave his candidacy its resonance. White or black Democratic leaders who fail in 1988 to hear and understand that message are asking for trouble.

White Democratic leaders should realize that the first Jackson campaign and all it represented have irrevocably changed the "rules of engagement" in the Democratic party. From now on, it will no longer be sufficient for white candidates to be "correct" on issues of concern to blacks. It will also be necessary to have blacks at every level in campaign organizations, including the very top levels—or else black support will not be forthcoming. Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro, tradi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tional white liberal politicians with wholly white inner circles, never grasped this. And, given the racial composition of their staffs, neither do Gary Hart or Mario Cuomo.

The party's leaders must also not resist black electoral empowerment. After 350 years as a submerged and essentially voiceless political class, blacks have begun to achieve a modicum of real political power in this country, as exemplified by the congressional careers of William Gray and Charles Rangel. White Democratic leaders should encourage this process in every way possible, even at the expense of personal ambition or traditional concepts of political loyalty. White liberals should understand why it was, for example, wrong for Paul Tsongas to have run against Edward Brooke in 1978. Brooke had been a good senator, and, at least as important, he was a symbol of pride to millions of blacks. Tsongas ignored that, and treated Brooke as he would have treated any other Republican who suddenly seemed vulnerable. That sort of thing will not do any longer.

The 1987 Chicago mayoral campaign may furnish evidence of whether the Democratic leadership has learned anything from the past. There is a chance that Mayor Harold Washington will be defeated in the Democratic primary by a white candidate and will then run as an independent. If any nationally prominent Democrats then support the party nominee against the black mayor, third-party fervor among blacks may well increase. By 1988, all that Chicago black Democrats would remember is that in 1983 Walter Mondale and Edward Kennedy backed Jane Byrne and Richard Daley for mayor and that in 1987 the party's leaders still couldn't bring themselves to support Harold Washington. The party would be repaid in kind.

FINALLY, THERE ARE TWO RACIALLY CHARGED issues left over from 1984, now quiescent, which will return to plague the Democrats in 1988. The first is runoff primaries.

Jesse Jackson is probably wrong when he says that the abolition of the runoff primary in the southern states would result in the election of many more blacks and white liberals to Congress. He ignores the option white conservative Democrats have of voting Republican in general elections if "unacceptable" black or white liberal candidates win Democratic nominations in single primaries. But to argue in this way is to overlook the symbolic significance of the issue.

The implicit belief of those national Democrats who support runoff primaries is that it is vastly better for southern blacks to be represented in Congress by white moderate Democrats than by white conservative Republicans. But with each passing year that argument cuts less ice with blacks. They feel increasingly insulted by the assumption that southern whites will never vote for blacks even as *they* are expected obediently to support white Democrats. Blacks are coming to reject the larger assumption that southern white racism must everlastingly be bowed to in the Democratic party, which is, at the same time, the party of black America. By 1988, support for runoff primaries or equivocation concerning them is not going to be a tenable Democratic position if blacks are going to remain Democratic loyalists. At the very least, there should be a plank in the 1988 Democratic party platform opposing runoffs.

The second issue is that of delegate support "thresholds." The Democratic National Committee (DNC) has recently lowered from 20 to 15 percent the "threshold" of primary votes that presidential candidates need to win in individual congressional districts in order to secure delegates to the national convention. This is a step in the right direction, but I agree with black members of the DNC that the threshold should be lower still, perhaps 10 percent or 5 percent. The basic principle is that the threshold should be low enough for candidates with disproportionate strength in minority communities to have that strength reflected in their delegate totals.

HOWEVER, BEYOND THESE (far from trivial) specific changes in the party's platform and rules, what will be required from white Democratic leaders will be a psychological revolution. The Democratic party will have to start taking its black members seriously. The party hierarchy will have to begin extending to black leaders the same respect and courtesy they would instinctively extend to a Robert Strauss or a Clark Clifford. Overcoming centuries of racism and condescension will not be easy. But it is essential.

What white Democrats can legitimately ask of blacks in this renegotiated relationship are, it seems to me, essentially three things: first, an end to willful ideological innocence on the part of some black leaders, particularly Jesse Jackson; second, a willingness to distinguish between issues concerning which blacks have a legitimate special interest and issues in which blacks have no more and no less of an interest than other citizens; and third and perhaps most difficult of all, a greater sense of electoral reality and coalitional forbearance than some black leaders now exhibit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In recent years, Jesse Jackson and like-minded black leaders have increasingly espoused an ideology which is sympathetic to "Third Worldism" (e.g., Syria, the PLO, Cuba, Nicaragua, etc.) and hostile to the United States and its allies from Central America (El Salvador) to the Middle East (Israel). This breaks sharply with the past practices of mainstream civil rights leaders, who generally either were silent on foreign policy, backed U.S. government policies, or dissented within the liberal consensus. Until the day before yesterday, members of the Black Caucus in Congress were essentially indistinguishable from their white liberal colleagues on foreign policy/defense issues. That is, they advocated less defense spending than the president did, opposed controversial weapons systems such as the MX, and tended to oppose the use of military force to achieve American foreign policy ends. But they also backed aid to Israel, and quietly supported America's traditional alliance structure, while feeling with somewhat more urgency than most white liberals the need to isolate South Africa.

Espagne 1936-1937
La guerre dévore la révolution

An analysis of the first few months of the Spanish Civil War—the months that changed it from a revolutionary into a conventional war. Written in Paris in 1938 by the late Henry Pachter, one of the founding editors of *Dissent*, it has just been reissued with minor changes by a French publishing house.

Paris: Spartacus Cahiers Mensuels, 234 pp., 90 francs. Photographs. Order through your bookstore or from Nouvelles Messageries de la Presse Parisienne, Alternative, 36 rue des Bourdonnais, Paris 75001.

JACKSON'S VIEWS, HOWEVER, are not within the liberal consensus. He is a self-proclaimed "Third-World person" who has expressed a sense of "kinship" with the rulers of Syria and once called Zionism a "poisonous weed." (Lately, a new circumspection has informed his comments on the Middle East.) He has expressed solidarity with Castro and called Reagan a "terrorist" after the retaliatory bombing of Libya. His position, while perhaps moderate by the standards of the United Nations General Assembly, is extreme by the standards of postwar American politics.

If Jackson's position on foreign policy is now or is about to become the position of black Democratic activists, it is only fair that that position be spelled out with as much care and coherence as possible, in order, in part, to inform more traditional white (and black) Democrats how much of a contest lies ahead. What, for example, are Jackson's views on the NATO alliance, the defense treaty with South Korea, the legitimacy of the Duarte government in El Salvador, the nature of the New People's Army in the Philippines, and on whether the U.S. should cut off military aid to Israel in order to force its withdrawal from the West Bank? What does he believe concerning the nature of the Soviet government and the degree, if any, of the threat it poses to the United States and to the survival of liberty in the world? It is simply not adequate to say that one is a "Baptist minister" interested in "reconciliation," as Jackson stated in response to criticism of his Cuban trip in 1984. He is now the leader of an important social movement. Revivalist vagueness and self-dramatization as a substitute for argument should be brought to an end.

The second subject is linked to the first. It is striking that two of the four platform planks that Jackson chose to contest in San Francisco in 1984 did not concern traditional civil rights issues.* In part, this is necessary and desirable. It had been part of the Democratic party's institutional racism that blacks were expected to be seen and not heard on foreign policy and other issues deemed to be of no concern to them (i.e., on all issues *but* civil rights

*At the Democratic convention, Jackson delegates sought unsuccessfully to amend the party platform by proposing planks in support of a 20 percent reduction in the defense budget, and in favor of a "no first use" policy on nuclear weapons, as well as proposing planks in opposition to runoff primaries and in favor of explicit employment quotas for minorities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

issues). Black participation in the debate over foreign policy or, for that matter, the Federal Reserve Board ought to be welcomed.

But a distinction should be carefully drawn between issues concerning which blacks have a legitimate special interest and those concerning which they have neither more nor less of an interest than everyone else. For example:

In recent years, the plight of blacks in South Africa has become, for American blacks, an issue inspiring feelings comparable to those aroused in American Jews by threats to Israel. A sense of embattled loyalty to persecuted members of one's own group gives rise to feelings of great intensity, and it is foolish and self-defeating to argue that such feelings have no place in political debate.

I would therefore consider it just as legitimate for black Democrats to argue for committing the party to the strongest possible position against apartheid as it is for Jews to argue for assistance to Israel. Where such issues are concerned, any party that wishes to remain in one piece will accommodate the intense concerns of its constituents.

HOWEVER, ALL ISSUES CANNOT BE TRANSFORMED into such issues. Arms control, the defense budget, or the proper level of M-1 in the money supply should not be debated in terms of the special needs of black Americans, at least primarily.

If a given defense expenditure is (arguably) necessary for the security of the United States and/or the preservation of western democracy, then black Americans have as much of an interest in supporting it as any other group of Americans. Arguments over such expenditures should be cast in terms of whether they do contribute to safeguarding American liberty and security, and racial special pleading should be left out of the debate.

Finally, there is the issue of coalitional forbearance. Many black leaders, including Jesse Jackson, have denounced the national Democratic party for "moving to the right" since 1984 and one can heartily agree that one Republican party is more than enough. But such criticism fails to take into account the degree to which the Democrats' dilemma is produced by objective electoral realities rather than merely by neoliberal failures of nerve. In discussing the Democratic party's ideological stance, black and white liberal activists should bear in mind the following recent history.

SINCE THE GREAT SEA CHANGE occurred in American politics between 1964 and 1968, the Democratic party has lost every presidential election but one, the 1976 exception that proves the rule. Carter won in 1976 because he received enough southern white, evangelical, and other socially conservative white working-class support to combine with his solid black vote to win such critical states as Tennessee and Ohio. When Carter lost that support in 1980, he lost his reelection bid (ideological liberals didn't like Carter by 1980, but, by and large, they still voted for him). Unless a Democratic candidate can make inroads into this lost white constituency in 1988, he will never win the presidency. And it is most unlikely that southern white moderates who voted for Carter in 1976 and then switched to Reagan in 1980 and 1984 would be won back in 1988 by a Democratic party pushed to the left by fears of a Jackson defection. It is this grim electoral problem that obsesses party leaders like Democratic National Chairman Paul Kirk and to worry about it is neither unrealistic nor ignoble.

Until now, black leaders have tended either not to acknowledge that this problem exists or to argue that it can be solved through populist grievance-collecting (e.g., Jackson's "support" for bankrupt white farmers, oil workers, the Hormel strikers, etc.). The hard ideological facts, however, remain. No Democratic candidate can win the presidency without massive black support, but a left-leaning candidate fully acceptable to Jesse Jackson will share the fates of McGovern and Mondale.

What black and white Democrats need to discuss with each other is how this trap may be escaped. Are there a candidate and a program around which black and white Democrats and enough other Americans to add up to 51 percent of the electorate can rally? If so, what is the program and who is the candidate?

These discussions should be premised on the absolute equality of all participants. And who knows, perhaps by beginning as equals in negotiations we may end as partners in an alliance to reshape this country. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thomas Byrne Edsall

Political Changes in the South

Black Majorities, White Minorities & the Fundamentalists

In Louisiana this past year, two seemingly disparate political events took place: the election of Sidney Barthelemy, a black Democrat, as mayor of New Orleans; and the endorsement of the Reverend Marion G. (Pat) Robertson's bid for the Republican presidential nomination by televangelist Jimmy Swaggart. In fact, both developments represent embryonic trends within the Democratic and Republican parties that are likely to intensify conflict within the GOP coalition and to ameliorate some of the tensions within the Democratic coalition.

The election of Barthelemy in New Orleans was significant because it reflects the revival of the importance of white voters in majority black communities. In first a primary and then a run-off, Barthelemy defeated credible white and black opponents. White voters supported Barthelemy by large margins, after deciding against throwing their votes away on a white candidate sure to lose a run-off against a black.

In the final election between two blacks, Barthelemy and William Jefferson, Barthelemy lost in the black community but overwhelmingly carried the white community. "When blacks were in the minority, they could decide who would be the white candidate," Barthelemy said. "Basically, what has happened is the white community is now in the position that the black community was in before."

In one respect, the voting patterns suggest the undermining of black voting strength by a white minority in a process the local paper, the *Times Picayune*, called "the white veto." From another vantage point, however, the outcome of the New Orleans election—which was replicated in the Atlanta September congressional fight, when whites effectively elected John Lewis over Julian Bond—suggests a potential lessening of political conflict between blacks and whites, the most divisive force in the Democratic party.

Even in Memphis, a city where blacks are about to become a majority and where race has been the single most important factor in politics for the past two decades, blacks and whites have been quietly discussing the possibility of joining forces to beat the conservative white mayor, Richard Hackett.

These developments in New Orleans, Atlanta, Memphis, and in scattered legislative districts in Alabama and Virginia put whites back in the political equation in majority—or near majority—black communities. This is a phenomenon which in the long run can only help a beleaguered southern Democratic party. Until now, the political process in many of these communities has functioned in many ways to convert the two-party system into a means of dividing the races. In Memphis, there has been an extraordinary correlation between the racial makeup of a precinct and its Democratic and Republican margins. This division by race was partially repaired only recently when moderate whites, including many Republicans, backed a black woman over a white man—both Democrats running in a nonpartisan election—to elect the first black to a citywide post. The victory of the black woman resulted from a unique set of alliances in the byzantine politics of Memphis, but it set in process a quiet examination of a biracial alliance to back a moderate black for mayor in 1987, including such prospective candidates as Dr. Willie Herenton, the respected superintendent of schools.

Black politics in many communities has entered a new stage in which the struggle for black control has been achieved, and the battle is now between various black factions. Jim Duffy, a political consultant who has worked on campaigns throughout the South, recently noted: "Once the fight is between black factions, the white vote becomes a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

central factor, and in this kind of contest, the code words for a successful candidate are: 'I am going to be fair, I'm going to be the elected official of everyone.'"

Fundamentalists Splitting Republicans

WHILE TRENDS IN THESE CITIES are encouraging coalition politics, just the opposite is taking place within a key constituent group of the Republican party: fundamentalist and evangelical Christians. Within this community, the presidential campaign of television evangelist Marion G. (Pat) Robertson is serving to lessen prospects for a successful alliance between traditional country-club Republicans and politically converted fundamentalist Christians.

In Michigan's August 1986 primary, Robertson's Freedom Council demonstrated the power of the Christian movement to influence a complex, low-turnout political event by winning a substantial number of "precinct delegates" while coming in second to Vice-President George Bush in the first test of prospective candidates for the 1988 GOP nomination.

From another vantage point, however, exit polls of the voters in the Michigan primary revealed strong suspicion and hostility toward his candidacy among Republican primary voters, as even born-again Christians were more supportive of Bush than Robertson. These findings were a severe blow to a man who had considered that his background—as old-line Virginia gentry, son of a U.S. senator, graduate of Yale Law School, and the successful entrepreneurial developer of a spectacularly successful religious-commercial television broadcasting empire grossing over $200 million annually—would provide broader credibility and legitimacy to his presidential bid.

In the months after the Michigan primary, Robertson has focused his activities on firming up his own base within the conservative fundamentalist and evangelical communities. The success of this drive has surprised both religious and more pragmatic Republican strategists, as many Christian leaders who were openly or privately scornful of Robertson have been forced by pressures within the fundamentalist Christian community to join the Robertson bandwagon. Among those who have endorsed Robertson or are leaning his way are Swaggart, who had earlier described the Robertson bid as a mistake; Robert Grant, head of Christian Voice, a lobby that issues moral "report cards" on elected officials; two former presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention, Charles Stanley and Jimmy Drapper; the Reverend Tim LaHaye, founder of the American Coalition for Traditional Values and perhaps the leading critic of "secular humanism"; and Ed McAteer, president of the Religious Roundtable.

The coalescing of Christian support behind Robertson has two consequences. First, Christian leaders already committed to a candidate are taken out of the bargaining process normal in the early phases of selecting a presidential nominee. This process is critical for any group seeking to gain political influence and leverage. The placement of a substantial bloc of the leadership in what is sure to be a losing campaign almost guarantees deep resentment and anger within the Christian community when the GOP rejects Robertson. Instead of negotiating for influence in the campaigns of the mainstream competitors, and in the next administration if one of the competitors wins the presidency in 1988, the Robertson campaign is forcing much of the conservative Christian community to place all its chips on a campaign sure to lose the nomination.

THE SECOND, AND RELATED, consequence is that the Robertson campaign has become a magnet coalescing much of the religious right. Just as it is reducing the ability of such other prospective candidates as George Bush, Jack Kemp, and Paul Laxalt to bargain with the religious right, Robertson's drive is functioning to meld together those forces seeking to force action on the most divisive political matters: abortion, school prayer, tuition tax credits, and other "value laden" issues.

All this adds up to a high probability of conflict within the GOP, undermining the Republican party's ability to maintain the highly fragile coalition that worked so well for President Reagan. The emergence of Swaggart as an important force in presidential politics epitomizes the prospective difficulties for the GOP. Swaggart is a sharp critic of other religions, particularly Catholicism which he has denounced as a "false cult" and a "doctrine of devils." Working and middle-class Catholics, however, have been an essential ingredient of recent Republican success, and Swaggart provides the Democratic party with material almost perfectly designed to push Catholics back into the Democratic fold.

One of the major successes of the GOP over the past two decades has been the driving of wedges between important elements of the Democratic coalition, as the forces and mechanisms for compromise and negotiation within the Democratic party weakened during the Vietnam and civil

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rights conflicts. In this context, another strong supporter of Robertson, Jamie Buckingham, founding pastor of the Tabernacle Church in Melbourne, Florida and publisher of the religious newsletter the *Buckingham Report*, reflected the potential for divisiveness when conservative Christians are pulled together within one campaign. In an interview with *Christianity Today*, Buckingham said: "Now we need a man to call us back to righteousness. There is a growing feeling among many Christians—myself included—that Robertson may be ordained by God for this task. . . . This ability to hear from God should be the number one qualification for the U.S. Presidency. If Christians believe God has a plan for this nation, shouldn't we want a man in the White House who listens to God, rather than a man who acts on the basis of political expediency?"

It is, however, expediency that gives strength to successful political alliances, both in the case of the biracial drives for elective office in the South and in the case of the alliance between martini-drinking Republicans and Bible-thumping fundamentalists as they line up at the polls. □

dissent **Major Sales Outlets for Our Magazine in New York City:**

BARNES & NOBLE, ANNEX
126 5th Ave. (18th St.)

COLISEUM BOOKS
1771 Broadway (57th St.)

B. DALTON
109 East 42nd St.

BOOKS & CO.
939 Madison Ave. (75th St.)

EASTERN NEWSSTANDS:
30 Rockefeller Plaza
750 Third Ave.
350 Fifth Ave.
200 Park Ave.
540 Madison Ave.

EASTSIDE BOOKSTORE
11 St. Mark's Place

GOTTFRIED BROS
600 Madison Ave.

HYDE PARK STATIONERS
992 Madison Ave. (77th St.)

JONIL
245 3rd Ave.

LIPTON
846 Lexington Ave.

THE MAGAZINE STORE
Broadway bet. 62nd & 63rd St.

NIKOS
462 6th Ave. (11th St.)

PAPYRUS
2915 Broadway (114th St.)

PARKSIDE STATIONERY
120 East 34th St. (Lexington Ave.)

PARSLEY SAGE, INC.
73 7th Ave. S. (Barrow)

PERIODIC NEWS
405 6th Ave.

REVOLUTION BOOKS
13 East 16th St.

SHAH STATIONERY
2795 Broadway (107th–108th)

SHAKESPEARE & COMPANY
2259 Broadway (81st St.)

ST. MARK'S BOOKSHOP
13 St. Mark's Place

STATE NEWS
1243 3rd Ave. (71st–72nd)

STATE NEWS—WEST SIDE
2571 Broadway (96th–97th)

TOBACCO SHACK, INC.
1546 1st Ave. (80th–81st)

VENTURE STATIONERS
1156 Madison Ave.

WAVERLY SMOKE
Waverly Place

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Juan E. Corradi

Argentina Today: The Cultural Mood

Democracy has returned to Argentina against a backdrop of profound changes in international and national life. To cite but a few: the intensification of power-bloc rivalry; revolutionary changes in the technology of information; the realignment of world views; high-tech militarization; and global financial jitters. On the domestic front: a drastic reduction in the numerical and political strength of the working class; the constraints imposed by the large debt; and the disappearance of a long-standing formula that equated free elections with Perónist governments. All these are rough indicators of how different Argentina is today from what it was just ten years ago.

Many of the new circumstances are tough. Yet some of the old social deadlocks have been broken just as the country embarks upon its democratization. As a result, there are opportunities to redeem the catastrophes of past decades. An important cultural corollary follows. Argentina needs to be rethought, since the older schemes of interpretation no longer apply. And this should be a pleasing prospect for those whose job is to think, to investigate, to imagine and create. One might therefore expect a cultural renaissance: new themes, debates, and imagined futures.

A cursory glance at the cultural field, however, seems to belie such expectations. Instead of a cultural renaissance, there is the persistence of stasis, perplexity, and malaise. The image of an Argentina on the move is more a product of the Western press and international good will than of local circumstance. What *has* improved remarkably is the country's image in the world. It appears as a nation that has made a dramatic shift from dictatorship to democracy, that has moved from savage to civilized politics, from repression to free expression. Yet the image is rosier abroad than at home. After a recent sojourn of four months in Buenos Aires, I have the impression of an impending cultural ferment that has not quite been activated. The long shadow of authoritarianism, the memories of anarchy and terror, still hover over the culture. There is an inertia of fear that makes life a little sad.

Surely it is a pleasure to see a city like Buenos Aires no longer in the grip of silence and dissimulation. But the city lags behind other Western metropolises in both invention and enthusiasm. It is a cosmopolitan center that has yet to recover from the bout of provincialism forced upon it by violence, ideology, and the explicitly retrograde designs of unelected governments.

Notably absent from the Argentine cultural landscape is the public presence of a new generation. Those who entered adolescence at the onset of the military "process" (as the dictatorship of 1976-1983 is called) and who resisted its onslaught in such areas of expression as rock music, today remain shy. This generation is entering a postmodern world of diversity and fragmentation without having had the benefits of a modern phase of acculturation. Certainly the young have their peculiar snobbisms, their special real or symbolic territories—music, encounters, drugs—their videos and comic books, but they seem moved by a pale imitation of international media trends rather than by genuine enthusiasm and a desire to explore. The young wake up from a long night of discipline,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

punishment, and overprotection, and find that the only authoritative figures are voices from a distant liberal past—Jorge Luis Borges, Ernesto Sábato—or echoes from distant lands. The former speak the language of ethical liberalism; the latter purvey an aesthetics of fragmentation and various strands of cultural nihilism.

For a majority of Argentine students, the collapse of local as well as imported utopias, the inertia of fear, the present stagnation of the economy, the privatism and careerism that have swept Western campuses for some time now, contribute to keeping them a diffident, quiescent, scattered generation.

ARGENTINA HOLDS TODAY ONLY THE RUDIMENTS of creative groups. A vibrant crop of new writers, filmmakers, musicians, photographers, architects, painters, theater directors, has not yet bloomed. To be sure, individual Argentines continue today, as they have always done, to have an impact in various fields. Some recent films have gained some notoriety in Europe and in the United States. And the same can be said of the works of novelists, scientists, dancers, musicians. Missing, however, is a group experience centered in Buenos Aires or other Argentine cities, whence it would radiate outward. To a considerable extent, Argentina remains a culture of the diaspora. For a long time Argentines with talent have stalked the world and accomplished much. But theirs has traditionally been the pilgrimage of exiles rather than the advance of cultural *conquistadores*.

On a superficial level, the visitor to Argentine cities finds nothing resembling the effervescence that she or he can find in Madrid. The now famed Spanish cultural revival may of course not be necessarily the harbinger of deep transformations. It can easily become a culture of images, of ephemeral fads and foibles. But it can also be the froth of a gathering wave of cultural change. In any case, one should wish on the still dour Argentines a bit more gaiety and footloose divertissement.

ADDING TO THE GENERAL TONE OF CULTURAL deflation, and important for the receptivity of the general population to new cultural proposals, is the residue of de-enlightenment that stems from the military dictatorship—the joint impact of political intolerance and the new role assumed by the Church in private education, public charity, and family morals. Indeed, religion has made significant inroads in what hitherto had been a secular culture. It is difficult to gauge the exact measure of this influence, but there is little question that the Church—which in Argentina has manifested much greater complicity with reaction than in Chile or Brazil—has conquered new emplacements in key institutions.

There may be several explanations for this revival of religious influence. I will only note that in times of terror and confusion, religion can become a haven of solace and structured meaning. But in the case of the Argentine Church, it has also been a matter of conscious policy to collaborate with the military regime. As a result, the Church jealously guards its new-won power, and is suspicious of democracy from fear of losing a monopoly over certain value areas. In this respect, we must see the Church as an organization of intellectuals of a special kind, on the road to cultural and state power. In recent months, the Church has waged a series of preemptive campaigns seeking to forestall the passage of progressive legislation in Congress, in the predictably sensitive areas of divorce, abortion, and education.

The Church also exercises a considerable measure of cultural veto power—an informal but effective censorship over the media and the arts. Its campaigns to block the distribution of controversial avant-garde films, such as Monty Python's *Life of Brian* or Godard's *Je vous salue Marie*, often verge on antidemocratic agitation. In this area perhaps more than in others, the government has shown caution and a readiness to compromise, aware, perhaps, that in a process of incipient democratization issues of community, moral value, and religious belief are more troublesome than the toughest social and economic problems.

Somehow, the frictions involving the Church seem potentially more bitter in Argentina than similar tensions in other Catholic countries, like Italy or Spain. The difference might be this: as opposed to Spain, where there has been a long erosion of Church influence over civil society since the days of Franco, in Argentina the Church seized rapidly and efficiently a series of opportunities to increase its power during the years of military dictatorship. The abrupt transition to democracy caught it unprepared to engage in subtle negotiations and concessions. In fact, the consolidation of democracy elicits fears among the clergy that they may have to surrender cultural power to unknown rivals and enemies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On the more general issues of ideology, Argentina shares in the overall trend of disbelief in universal world-views, great historical narratives, and redemptive politics. There are specific local circumstances that reinforce those trends. In the past, radical intransigence led many Argentines to a fatal impasse. They lost not only liberty, life, and country, but their identities as well. Such lessons have not been lost on those who remain active today. The result is a marked blurring of former ideological boundaries and a softening of political stridency among intellectuals.

Much as these changes in the cultural map of Argentina are welcome developments in comparison with the recent past, I cannot refrain from asking: If the older contrasts are ruled out, why must the new color be gray? The withdrawal from ideological commitment can just as well lead to the freeing of creative energies for the pursuit of many other projects as to a wallowing in perplexity, to the reification of new values, and to the institution of new taboos. This is the central dilemma of a democratic culture in Argentina today.

The way in which the country stumbled into democracy after the Falklands war, the tentative steps towards its consolidation under Alfonsín, and the citizens' perception of its fragility, have placed limits on the imagination, for fear that daring thoughts might be destabilizing. Argentines spend a lot of time contemplating democracy as an object, and worrying about its future. Never has so much ink flowed on studies of democracy. Never have so many erstwhile firebrands applied themselves to offering moderate advice to the public and the authorities.

ARGENTINE EVENTS ECHO WIDER TRENDS IN the cultural climate of the West. During the past decade, radicalism in both Europe and the United States has collapsed in favor of neoconservative and neoliberal proposals. Thus, local and international factors converge to create a specific intellectual atmosphere. Those factors are, in fast review: the spread of "postmodern" outlooks, the end of mobilizing prophecies, the lingering guilt about past radical commitments, the apology for their disastrous results, the sentiment that the recent past should be overcome rather than preserved, and the defensive endorsement of democracy—captured by the phrase "Never Again." These factors inhibit the full utilization of formal freedoms. Nobody is telling Argentines what to think, but they seem to be telling themselves that certain issues are best left unthought.

The present situation bears some resemblance to the period that followed the fall of Perón after 1955. Both then and now, a relatively small group of intellectuals that had been formerly excluded from culture and politics arrived at important positions of power and influence. There are, however, important differences. The scope of intellectual influence in the government is greater today, but intellectuals show much less interest in reforming the universities and in providing ideological guidance to the wider public. In the past, Argentine intellectuals used the public universities as bases of political mobilization, elaborating and spreading radical ideologies. To this, many governments responded with repression, and military governments with wholesale persecution. Today,

"They're Hiding"

The other day, back in Montevideo, I was talking with a friend who told me of a friend of hers who had described his years in prison. He had recalled how his little five-year-old daughter would come to visit. She would prepare all week for her visit by making him a drawing for his cell wall. Only, the prison guard served as censor and confiscated the drawings, one after another, before she could even show them to her father. "No pictures of people," he told her one week. "No pictures of houses," he told her another. The next time, she came with a colorful crayon drawing of a bird. "Birds are forbidden," she was gruffly told, and that drawing, too, was confiscated. The next week, she arrived with a drawing of a grove of trees, and this time the guard grudgingly let it through. Her father held his little daughter in his lap and admired her drawing. "This is beautiful," he told her, "and it means so much to me that you brought me this present. I'm so touched. I'll be able to put it there on the wall and it will be like a window. Look at the wonderful trunks that you draw, and the thick branches, and the leaves, and then, here, what are these—those little circles among the leaves? Are these fruit trees? Are those lemons?" "Sh-h-h! his daughter interrupted him, whispering sternly. "Be quiet, Daddy. Those are the eyes of the birds. *They're hiding!*"

Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, quoted in a "Talk of the Town" interview, the New Yorker, *July 28, 1986* □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intellectuals no longer think of themselves as revolutionary outcasts, but as specialists with a sense of public service. They prefer the carefully designed and funded research project to the political pamphlet, the corridors of power to rallies in the square.

Whatever continuity exists in culture has been provided by informal networks in the liberal professions, postgraduate centers, international research teams, and foundation-sponsored research with close ties to the rest of Latin America, Europe, and the United States. The greater the professionalization and international character of a field, the greater its ability to withstand the onslaught of politics. The habits developed under adversity persist today under democracy. Through hard-won survival, a new consensus gradually evolved in the intellectual community: the desire to apply to the field of knowledge and culture the same principles that regulate behavior in a democratic polity. But culture also pays a price for civic conviviality. Flatness and boredom result. Moreover, such consensus only holds among the intellectual elite that controls cultural power. Outside this restricted circle there is a mass of marginalized and underpaid intellectuals whose simmering resentment may one day become the breeding ground for new radical ideologies.

In sum, the participation of intellectuals in politics, their public role, and their self-image have changed in Argentina. They no longer fancy themselves the interlocutors of imaginary Subjects of history ("the working class," "the Perónist masses," etc.). They entertain instead more modest expectations. They no longer ask themselves whether they should choose between Reform or Revolution, but whether they can balance expertise with ethical concern, a politics of conviction with a politics of pragmatic accommodation.

The Alfonsín administration has placed many intellectuals in key positions of responsibility. Many of these come from the social sciences, both as technical experts and as political strategists. They keep their ties to former colleagues in the research centers. They have access to the media—not as gurus, but as individuals capable of putting the basic issues of science and culture in the larger context of politics and within the grasp of ordinary people. There is a new stress on "realistic" issues, set against a backdrop of concern for the weakness of institutions. There is a correlative decline in the input of intellectuals in oppositional politics. The result is an unprecedented willingness to engage in dialogue and "free communicative action," but also a paucity of vision, and a decline of the critical imagination.

While the Perónist period was an era of revolutionary self-aggrandizement for intellectuals, and the period of military rule one of silence and fear, the new democratic phase is a period of self-limitation. This bent towards self-limitation is shared by many other segments of society: by new social movements that are not revolutionary but issue-specific; by the government, which is acutely aware of constraints; by the unions, which are hard hit by austerity and suffer the depletion of their ranks; by Perónists, who lost elections and a unified leadership; by the military, who lost a war and their self-confidence; and by ordinary citizens, who lost relatives and friends in past violence and chaos.

Argentine democracy today remains a prudential enterprise. It is endorsed more out of hard-learned sobriety than out of passion. And yet, beyond public discourse and conventional pieties, there is a surplus energy, a latent predisposition to participate, a demand for a meaningful life that bears no direct relation to job or self-interest, and that remains untapped. If and as democracy helps settle some of the more engrossing issues of economic growth, order, and alternation of leadership, step by step down its crowded agenda, these energies will be released and Argentina might then become a land of cultural adventure, as it has been in brief moments in the past. For this ill-defined cultural ingredient, which is still missing, is the real salt of life. □

ARE YOU MOVING?

•

Second-class publications are *not* forwarded by your Post Office, but returned (at senders' expense) to be repackaged and reshipped: . . . *Three postage payments, for us, plus weeks of delay.* . . . To avoid this, and help DISSENT, *please notify us one month in advance of your change of address.* Send both old and new address to:

•

DISSENT, 521 Fifth Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Desmond Morton

Canada's Democratic Left Inches Ahead

Last year, Canada's New Democratic party (NDP) celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday. Given the odds against democratic socialist parties in the North American climate, the NDP's survival is no mean feat.

The NDP is not a splinter. Although most Canadians still prefer the Liberals or the Progressive Conservatives (known locally as the Tories), the NDP can count on backing from about one voter in five. New Democrats form the government in the province of Manitoba and the northern Yukon Territory; they are runners-up to right-wing populist regimes in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. NDP candidates won a quarter of the votes in the 1985 election in Ontario, Canada's biggest and richest province.

In Canada's most recent federal election, held September 1984, the NDP survived a Progressive Conservative landslide that for a time threatened to bury the party in the same grave as an unpopular Liberal administration. While Brian Mulroney swept 211 of the 282 parliamentary seats, the NDP held its own in thirty constituencies and won 18 percent of the vote. By the autumn of 1986, disillusionment with Mulroney's performance had boosted NDP standing in nationwide opinion polls to 28 per cent.

Cooperative Commonwealth Roots

An earlier Tory sweep, in 1958, helped conceive the NDP. In that election, Canada's former socialist party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), saved only eight seats and nine percent of the vote. That was motive enough for worried CCF leaders to echo urgings from the executive of the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC) to help create a new, more broadly-based party with formal labor links. The CLC, Canada's equivalent of the AFL-CIO, helped organize the largest, longest, and hottest political convention Canadians had ever seen: in August 1961, the New Democratic party was born.

Opinion is still divided about the need for a fresh start. Certainly the Canadian left needed a jolt of political energy and an image that fitted postwar prosperity better than the CCF's depression-era traditions. Labor organizations that had always backed the CCF did more, and after 1961 some unions that had done nothing were prodded into activity. At the same time, unanimous resolutions did not turn unionists into socialists. Large chunks of Canada's badly fragmented labor movement spurned the CLC's directive. Barely a quarter of union members and their families regularly vote for the NDP. For enemies of the democratic left, union-bashing was a timely substitute for red-baiting. Voters in Saskatchewan, the CCF's prairie heartland, defeated their twenty-year-old socialist government in 1964 and the NDP image got much of the blame.

Probably the pluses and minuses of the NDP canceled out. Most of the seasoned idealists who had built the CCF remained to sustain the new party. The members they recruited inherited many of the same humane liberal values. The main difference between the CCF and NDP platforms was the new party's earnest if unavailing attempt to meet the nationalist aspirations of French Canadians, then at the outset of a twenty-year debate over independence.

The most obvious CCF-NDP continuity was in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leadership. Elected CCFers switched labels and carried on. The shrewd and eloquent Tommy Douglas, who won five successive elections as premier of Saskatchewan's CCF government, moved to Ottawa in 1961 and led the new party for a decade. In 1971, David Lewis, a Montreal Jewish immigrant who was the CCF's greatest national secretary and the NDP's political architect, succeeded him. Only in 1976, with the choice of Ed Broadbent, did the NDP have a federal leader who had not been bred in the CCF. CCF strongholds, particularly in urban areas, converted easily to the NDP. By 1971, even Saskatchewan was ready to give its New Democrats eleven more years of power.

Ever since Progressives broke the two-party monopoly in 1921, Canada's parliamentary system has learned to accommodate third parties. At the same time, the party discipline necessary to operate a parliamentary system makes U.S.-style brokerage politics difficult. Canadian unions, for example, had made repeated attempts to vent their frustrations in a labor party before the CLC-CCF marriage finally produced the New Democrats.

Canadians also have a thick streak of faith in government and in collectivist solutions. Relatively few and scattered by comparison with their American neighbors, Canadians have a tradition of turning to the state for tasks Americans have confided to corporations. By 1920, most Canadian railways were publicly owned. Even Conservative governments helped create the Bank of Canada, Ontario Hydro (Canada's biggest utility), and the state-run broadcasting system, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. CCF or NDP proposals to socialize specific industries and commercial activities often find Canadian opinion ready to be persuaded.

The NDP's 1973 demand for a nationalized oil company to buffer future OPEC price shocks and give Canadians a share in their own energy industry was one such example. By 1975, Petro-Can was a reality and a Conservative threat to dismantle it helped defeat the short-lived Tory government in 1980. Government-run car insurance, an NDP policy, is found in three western provinces and Quebec, and the systems have proved so economical and popular that no subsequent governments have dared scrap them.

Gerald Sorin

South Africa and the American South

According to a new public opinion poll conducted for the Sunday *Times* of London, "South African whites are increasingly unhappy with the apartheid system and a majority want the nationalist leader Nelson Mandela freed from prison." Even as the sound and fury of events make it appear that polarization is the order of the day in South Africa, many whites are tormented by their divided consciences on the "race question."

There is here a striking echo of some dimensions of life and mind from the pre-Civil War American South. From early on white slaveowners expressed ambivalence about their "peculiar institution," referring to it, almost universally, as a "necessary evil." It is true that southern leaders would by the 1830s develop a "positive good" argument about slavery. This was mainly in response to the growing profitability of cotton growing; the increasing distance from the libertarianism of the revolutionary era; and as a defense against a small, but persistent and growing antislavery movement in the North. The "positive good" rhetoric, however, was no more than a thin veneer. The old republican values—independence, individuality, liberty, equality—continued to haunt. And it was here that abolitionists thought that they could make a dent in an otherwise powerful system sustaining a deeply entrenched social and economic elite. Indeed Southerners, too, believed that abolitionists could succeed by focusing on slaveowners' moral conflict. John C. Calhoun maintained that the value of the "positive good" argument lay in its ability to defend southern *consciences* against antislavery attacks, and thus against the possibility of southerners freeing their slaves themselves. The South was not exactly preoccupied with guilt, but some southerners were tormented, and much of the region's intellectual energy went into the effort to convince itself, and incidentally the world, that its peculiar evil was in reality good.

An important wing of the abolitionist movement recognized southern *Zerrissenheit*, and argued for moral suasion and against coercion. Nonetheless these abolitionists advocated boy-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Canadians also cherish a broad range of universal income-maintenance and social programs, ranging from family allowances and unemployment insurance to public prepaid medical insurance. Though such national programs have often been enacted by Liberal or Tory governments, Canadians have had little trouble recognizing that the impetus came from the CCF or NDP. As Saskatchewan premier and then as NDP national leader, Tommy Douglas fought the bitter, bruising battles with a hostile medical establishment that led to Canada's current Medicare. Such struggles, however unpopular at the time, are part of the political capital New Democrats have built up.

Support from Unions

CANADA HAS A MORE BUOYANT LABOR MOVEMENT than its neighbor. While American unionism has shrunk to less than a fifth of the organizable work force, in Canada about forty percent of workers belong to unions. That is partly because no Canadian jurisdiction yet has right-to-work laws and partly because of a dramatic growth in public-sector unions. Three of the five largest unions in Canada bargain for federal, provincial, and local government employees, many of whom have the right to strike.

Public-service unionism can have ambiguous political consequences. Civil service laws enforce political neutrality on public employees, unionized or not. NDP governments have also found themselves in adversary roles that they never had to play with such loyal backers as the United Steelworkers or the UAW. However, public employees have created areas of support for the NDP at a time when both Liberal and Conservative parties have espoused massive deregulation, "down-sizing" government, and privatization. The constituency that includes Ottawa's Parliament Hill is now held by the NDP. In Nova Scotia, where declining industries and an aging work force have almost wiped out a traditional socialist stronghold on Cape Breton Island, government workers in Halifax, a dockyard and government city, have given the NDP a new base.

Canadian nationalism is another factor that works for the NDP. Visitors who find Canadians

cotts—*sanctions* if you will—the withdrawal of fellowship, the abolition of the interstate slave trade, and the abolition of slave sales in Washington, D.C. They did not do this to "punish" or so much with the thought that these measures would *force* southerners into reform. They sincerely believed that the strength of their wills, and their example of sacrifice (of cotton and sugar, and jobs and profits in the New England mills) would create a context for the manifestation of "true" southern white conscience. They knew with William Lloyd Garrison, the dean of American abolitionism, that no oppressor class gives up its power voluntarily, and that antislavery might, in fact, very well have to have its victory on the battlefield. Many thought, however, that the battle would be less bloody because southern white hearts, after years of moral conflict, would not be fully in it.

A significant number of reputable historians now agree that the defeatism prevalent in the Confederacy, the disproportionate number of desertions, and the general decline of morale, were related to feelings of uneasiness over a war for the defense of slavery. This might go far toward explaining why the Confederacy lost a war it had excellent prospects of winning. Many leading Southerners expressed relief when their "peculiar institution" was destroyed from the outside. These included Robert E. Lee and Mary Chesnut, who wrote at the very beginning of the war, "God forgive us, but ours is a *monstrous* system of wrong and inequity."

Many of the advocates of sanctions against South Africa are, like the abolitionists, not seeking to punish or even to coerce, but are hoping to create a context within which those South African whites "increasingly unhappy with the apartheid system" might become a dominant voice. It may come to the battlefield anyway as it did in nineteenth-century America. But like the white American southerner, many South African whites are divided, not only among themselves, but within their individual selves, and seem incapable of an imaginative, forceful initiative toward solving their "race problem" without outside moral pressure. If it comes to the battlefield after sanctions "fail," perhaps the white South African's heart will not be fully in it; perhaps the bloodletting will thereby be mercifully shortened. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

almost indistinguishable from their neighbors have a point, but Canadian critics of Ronald Reagan's diplomatic style or of the excesses of corporate capitalism are numerous and their views are usually echoed by the NDP. Party leaders, more sensitive to Canadian opinion than the rank and file, would like to mute the NDP's formal rejection of NATO, NORAD and other Cold War hangovers, but a 1985 federal convention voted overwhelmingly to sustain the NDP's neutralist policies and there is no sign that party attitudes have changed. The NDP, like the CCF before it, has defended Canada's cultural institutions, in publishing and broadcasting, from continental takeover.

Of course no one, even in the NDP, expects the party to run Canada in the near future. Ed Broadbent, federal leader since 1976, inherited the thankless task of maintaining a national presence and the daily parliamentary battle while the more hopeful struggles occur in the provinces. Under the circumstances, the NDP has been remarkably well served. A rumpled, friendly man with the look of an ex-boxer, Broadbent was a professor of political philosophy until he entered Parliament in 1968. For years, he was the only dialectical match for Canada's former prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau. An autoworker's son who represents the city of Oshawa, General Motors' Canadian base, Broadbent has an unprofessorial skill in winning the affection of all types of humanity. Constituents seem to find no fault in a socialist who likes big cigars and fast sports cars. Neither do Canadians who regularly tell pollsters that they prefer Broadbent over his Liberal and Tory rivals.

Their preferences do not convert to votes. In the three most recent national elections, half the Canadians who claimed that Broadbent would make the best prime minister voted Liberal or Conservative because they feared the NDP or its union allies. The NDP's solution, promoted by both of Broadbent's predecessors, is that socialism must prove itself in the provinces before it can hope to take the stage in Ottawa. It is an old Canadian rule. In 1958, when the Tories swept Canada, they had already won seven of the ten provinces; Brian Mulroney had eight of them when his party triumphed in 1984.

The provinces are a special challenge because each has evolved its own political culture. The difference between Ontario and its French-speaking neighbor, Quebec, might seem obvious, but what outsider could explain why Alberta is the only western province never to have had an NDP government? One explanation for the consistently right-wing tone of its politics is that Alberta is Canada's Texas, with oil, cattle and a steady influx of Americans. That may be changing, as the province's energy and agricultural industries struggle with falling prices and a continuing drought. The NDP, which won 16 of 79 legislature seats on May 8th, is now Alberta's "official opposition" or government-in-waiting.

In the other three western provinces, New Democrats form the government in Manitoba and might have regained power in Saskatchewan and British Columbia with younger or more inspired leadership. As it was, the NDP narrowly won the popular vote in Saskatchewan and held 42 per cent in British Columbia against opponents who deliberately buried their right-wing records in a blaze of populist imagery. In both provinces, the NDP remains the only imaginable political alternative. East of Ontario, in contrast, New Democrats have only a few strongholds in the traditional-minded and impoverished Atlantic provinces. Only in Nova Scotia, under the NDP's sole woman provincial leader, Alexa McDonough, does the NDP have a hope of early major gains.

Ontario and Quebec: Key Provinces

THE PROVINCES THE NDP WAS PRIMARILY CREATED TO win, Ontario and Quebec, are the key to any party's federal hopes. So far they have provided the party with its major frustrations. Patient and resolute courting of Quebec nationalists in the 1960s hurt the NDP in the rest of the country and did nothing to deflect Quebec's left from involvement in the separatist Parti Quebecois. So long as radical Quebeckers pondered independence, the NDP was irrelevant. When that dream was rejected in a 1980 referendum, the once-militant Quebec left seems to have dissolved in disillusionment. Twenty years of relentless political passion have left Quebeckers exhausted and eager for other diversions.

A major component of the NDP's strong standing in national opinion polls is unprecedented support from Quebec. Torn between old Liberal and weak new Tory loyalties and disillusioned by separatism, voters are parking their votes with the NDP. Turning "parkers" into real supporters is probably the NDP's toughest current challenge.

The neighboring province of Ontario is very different and perhaps even more frustrating. There

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the NDP has organization, effective union backing, and leadership. In 1975 under Stephen Lewis, David Lewis's son and the current Canadian ambassador to the UN, the NDP came second in a three-way race, not far behind an entrenched Conservative regime. Two years later, the party dropped back into third place behind the Liberals. Two leaders later, when the 42-year-old Tory dynasty came to the end of its road in the 1985 Ontario election, the NDP did no better. One reason was that the Tories, pushed by small town and rural supporters, turned right. Ontario Liberals, normally on the right of the spectrum, filled the vacant center, largely by echoing election promises filched from the NDP. New Democrats merely held their own.

Currently, NDP votes keep the Liberals in power in Ontario, in return for a written pledge to keep those stolen promises. Delivering on NDP reforms could well make the Liberals popular enough to sweep the province. If winning Ontario is a prerequisite for winning Canada, the NDP faces another round of waiting.

It has plenty of work in the interval. Like other parties of the democratic left, the NDP is short of attractive economic strategies to cope with the post-Keynesian crisis. Since Canada already has a far larger public sector than Sweden, voters have no illusion that sweeping nationalization is the easy and obvious remedy for a vulnerable resource-based economy.

When he became NDP leader in 1976, Ed Broadbent's highest policy priority was to endow his party with a persuasive industrial strategy. By 1979, its main lines were clear: Canada could at least produce most of the mining machinery, oil rigs, and farm equipment her resource-based economy traditionally imported. The strategy, with its emphasis on job creation, made little perceptible difference to the NDP showing in the 1979 and 1980 elections. It is a commentary on television campaigning that voters loved Broadbent's image but disliked or, more often, ignored what he had to say. By 1984, when the NDP faced utter eclipse in the rush to defeat Trudeau's Liberals, party strategists abandoned economic messages in favor of a straight populist appeal. Broadbent campaigned as a defender of "ordinary Canadians" against Mulroney and Trudeau's successor, John Turner, both rich corporation lawyers. The technique worked well enough to boost NDP support seven points in a two-month campaign.

Populism and memories of past services can carry Canadian socialists only so far. Without a convincing economic strategy for Canada and especially for the vulnerable, resource-based western provinces New Democrats may soon be governing, democratic socialism will be in serious trouble. The problem, as Broadbent and his advisers know, is that Canadians like the benefits of socialism but they cling to the postwar faith that capitalism somehow delivers the means to pay for them. Like others in the western democracies, the Canadian instinct in tough times is to squeeze social spending rather than socialize the economy. As an electorally competitive socialist party, the NDP has to wrestle with public instincts.

Adjusting to Technology

ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THE NDP'S STRUGGLE to adjust a broad-based socialist party to the age of technological politics. How do New Democrats keep the grass roots from withering when pollsters and media consultants can tell politicians how to win elections? Government grants and tax deductions have become the party's main source of funds, but the financial tap would turn off if the NDP fell below the minimum share of seats and votes that guarantee official status. Would the party imperil that status by obeying fatally wrongheaded convention resolutions? The 1985 NDP convention heard eloquent appeals from party leaders to broaden policies to attract disillusioned left-wing Liberals. Instead, delegates moved the NDP a couple of notches to the left, with a reiteration of demands to get out of military alliances and new proposals for public ownership, abortion reform, and workers' control.

The struggle between ideology and pragmatism is not new in the NDP or its counterparts, but technology has given the pragmatists new influence. Federal funding and tax rebates for political contributions have helped the NDP shed some of its old poverty. Computerized fund-raising has given the NDP a broader base of financial contributors than either of its two more powerful rivals. In turn, the NDP has mastered sophisticated communications techniques. At times, in self-preservation, the party has surrendered to a contemporary preference for image over substance. Broadbent's 1984 strategy, based on the slogan of "ordinary Canadians," reflected careful survey work. Election planners bluntly rejected the alternative strategy: try-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to convert a doubting electorate to believe in the NDP's economic medicine. In the circumstances, did convention resolutions really matter?

Problems of policy and structure dog all parties of the democratic left. The New Democrats are lucky to have them. In Canada, no institution that challenges the American norm can expect an easy ride but the NDP is one of the major reasons that the northern half of the continent is different.

A quarter-century ago, the architects of the New Democratic Party aimed for a democratic socialist government in Canada. In 1986, the NDP is about half way to that goal. To get all the way, it needs about twice as many federal votes and two or three more provinces where the party is at least the alternative government. Only history can tell whether the second part of the journey will be hard or easy. It no longer looks impossible. □

Jim Beebe

Social Democrats in the Yukon

The Klondike Gold Rush of 1898 began a pattern of uneven economic development that continues nearly a century later in the Yukon, that vast, mountainous territory in the northwest corner of Canada. The discovery of an untapped resource creates fabulous wealth for a few, while luring and then abandoning thousands of workers.

"We have more ghost towns than living communities" is how Yukon Premier Tony Penikett sums up his territory's chronic boom-and-bust economy. "The ore goes to Tokyo, the profits to Toronto, the taxes to Ottawa, the jobs to Alberta, and we end up with a hole in the ground."

The latest bust was caused by the 1981 worldwide recession, which doomed petroleum and mining in the Yukon. While the Conservative government dithered, thousands of people left the Yukon, and unemployment soared over 20 percent. In the midst of this depression, Tory cabinet ministers ordered luxury cars for themselves, but denied school buses to rural students.

Looking for a better future, Yukon voters last year elected the North's first social democratic government, the regional New Democratic party. Under Penikett and the motto "Working Together," the social democrats promised immediate job creation and long-term stable economic development. Penikett, who campaigned against the Conservatives as a "white middle-class boys' club," heads an eight-member caucus that better reflects Yukon demographics: five rural members, four Native Americans, and two women. The cabinet includes two aboriginal people, one a woman.

The new government began with classic Keynesian measures: $25 million in public works added to the current budget and $81 million for 1986-87. Together these are expected to create more than 1,000 jobs for the Yukon's 12,000 workers and to provide better facilities for the Yukon's dozen rural communities, ranging from a health center in Old Crow above the Arctic Circle to the first school gym in the mining town of Elsa.

Over last winter, the new government gave communities $2 million in a unique job-creation project that paid not just for labor but for materials to build facilities of lasting value. The social democratic government does not intend to replace private with public development or megaprojects with mini ones, but to create a diversified mix that can better weather the world's economic storms.

In contrast to the open hostility with which it greeted neighboring British Columbia's first social

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

democratic government in 1972, the mining industry is working cooperatively with the new Yukon government. Politicians and public servants worked hard to help reopen a large lead-zinc-silver mine that had been the territory's largest private employer for more than a decade before closing in 1982. In return, the government is requiring local contracts and hiring, as well as training programs for Native Americans, women, and youth.

In the long run, though, the government is committed more to the "small is beautiful" philosophy of E. F. Schumacher than to Keynes. Penikett plans to build a new economy that is more diversified, more self-sustaining, more stable, more locally controlled.

The Yukon economy is notoriously weak. The territory exports almost everything it produces and imports almost everything it consumes. For instance, of the Yukon's $40-million annual food bill, less than $1 million goes for local products. Solutions range from greenhousing to elk ranching. Of the $120-million annual energy bill, almost all goes outside, including $90 million for petroleum products. Solutions include wood-chip heating plants and serious conservation. Such small-scale, renewable-resource-based industries are well suited to Yukon communities, most of which have fewer than 1,000 people. Money spent on local products circulates in the local economy, creating jobs and wealth as it changes hands. As an experiment, the government commissioned sets of office furniture from local craft shops. The results? Lower government spending and higher tax revenues.

Similarly, the government is designing its buildings for locally made wooden beams rather than imported steel beams and steelworkers. Penikett hopes that diversification can soften the cycles experienced by mining. The object, Penikett says, is for everyone who lives here to be able to make a living, rather than for a few outsiders to make a killing. Doing so would finally break the painful cycle begun by the gold rush. □

To Our Contributors:

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your ms—the mails aren't always reliable. And please remember that we can't return articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility.

(4) Notes and footnotes should also be typed double-spaced, on a *separate* sheet. As we're not an academic journal, we prefer that they, wherever possible, be dropped altogether or worked into the text.

(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

(6) Please bear with us—we have accumulated quite a backlog of material, and you may have to wait for a few issues before you see your article in print.

THE EDITORS □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Lekachman

Yuppies, Technocrats & Neoliberals

Chilly Thoughts on the National Future

Walk north on a balmy evening from Lincoln Center in Manhattan along Columbus Avenue for fifteen or twenty blocks and treat yourself to a vision of youth à la mode. No costume is outré when clothes are expected to make statements comprehensible to peers, if not to touring cultural anthropologists and marveling senior citizens. Boutiques, sidewalk cafés, and sanctuaries of gelati, tofutti, and premium ice cream jostle each other. Lines form in front of particularly popular "in" establishments like Ruelles, where the sounds of soft rock entice customers into a Gay Nineties interior whose walls feature buxom female nudes. Overheard conversations conduct themselves in the educated tones of the college credentialed. Loud along the boulevard resonates the psychobabble of relationships, getting in touch with one's feelings, personal growth, transference and countertransference, how to get through the summer while the analyst is away, and other oral evidences of the vulgarization of austere Freudian doctrine. If a classical Freudian survives and keeps the faith, he or she will in moments of carefully rationed utterance tell a patient yearning for happiness that the best psychoanalysis offers is enhanced capacity to cope with ordinary, human misery. Not at all a palatable message for the optimistic young.

WHO ARE THESE YOUNG URBAN PROFESSIONALS? What do they do, think, portend for the national future? There is no official definition of the group. *Business Week* advised its addicts that as of the New Year, yuppies were "out" along with economists, consultants, Theory Z, synergy, and junk bonds. Seventy-five million Americans were born between 1946 and 1966, making the yuppie generation slightly less than a third of the nation's population in the middle of the 1980s. Obviously not very many of them qualify for this label redolent of mingled envy and derision. The cohort includes high-school dropouts, drug addicts, street criminals, welfare mothers, clerks, craftspeople, farmers, white-, pink-, gold- and blue-collar workers, and career members of the armed services, not to mention small businessmen and women, civil servants, and housewives. Nothing new here of course. Cultural and political phenomena invariably define themselves in the polemics and behavior of vanguards.

The uncertain fraction of the seventy-five million who possess convincing claims to genuinely elite membership share educational credentials. At the least, they possess college degrees. The lawyers and aspiring executives have received marketable credentials from law factories and schools of business administration. They are associates in the Wall Street and midtown major law firms. In famous litigations, the particularly privileged among them may get to carry the briefcases of their seniors. The stacks of documents they sedulously check generate revenues priced at $80 to $100 per hour. Yuppies of course deal in many other varieties of symbols and abstractions—as stock analysts, management consultants, editors, computer programmers, loan officers, forecasters, designers of advertising and marketing campaigns, and shapers of images for politicians and other performers. Yuppie politicians consult David Garth for image implants, for that famous nonyuppie sees deeply into yuppie psyches.

Excerpted and adapted from *Visions and Nightmares: America After Reagan*, © 1987 by Robert Lekachman. Reprinted by permission of Macmillan Publishing Company.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Unlike old-fashioned intellectuals, who are similarly removed from the mundane sphere of physical production, yuppies specialize only in those varieties of the intangible that promise financial profit, and by habit and preference comfort themselves with the application of technique to data. They are the adepts of the age of information. No doubt connections exist between their daily labors and the quantity and quality of food, clothing, living space, cars, and consumer appliances that ordinary folks aspire to, but these are singularly elusive. Strategic planners generate strategic plans. Public relations wizards put spins on media perceptions of their clients. Space buyers distribute advertising budgets among competing print and television media. Humbler, blue-collar types work with machines and their own hands to fill the tangible needs of, among others, yuppies themselves. In Marxist terms, yuppies inhabit the superstructure atop an ever narrowing base.

Prophets of the information age—Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell, the late Princeton economist Fritz Machlup—accurately forecast the occupational restructuring of a labor force that continues to reduce the minority of men and women whose efforts eventuate in products and services for ultimate consumers, and to increase the proportion of information or misinformation workers. With some exceptions, mostly related to new computer-related specialties, yuppies in their offices occupy themselves more modishly in ways similar to those of their predecessors.

Contrasting Stereotypes

TO BE A REAL YUPPIE ONE MUST THINK and act like one. Saints excepted, we are all creatures of self-interest. Most religions and ethical codes do their best to mitigate the primacy of ego. The yuppie code is distinctive, for it appears to be the first article of yuppie faith that nothing is more natural and even commendable than narcissism. To be obsessed with self is commonplace among the young and far from unique among the middle-aged and elderly. There is, accordingly, nothing unprecedented in yuppie displays of ego, any more than in their passion for the latest fads in food, house plants, furniture, physical fitness recipes, watering holes, summer weekend locales, audio and video equipment, movies and music, and the multitudinous artifacts of personal adornment. The celebration of self in our culture differs from time to time and place to place in expression, but not in essential psychic quality.

Yet there is something distinctive about this decade's yuppie phenomenon, suggested by a pair of contrasting stereotypes, the first of them William H. Whyte, Jr.'s *The Organization Man*, a bestseller of the Eisenhower era, and the second Charles Reich's coronation of youth, *The Greening of America*, an evocation of the flower-power side of the 1960s. Whyte's title entered the language of common discourse and he is not fairly to be charged with admiring the behavior he analyzes. Organization men—the corporate culture of the 1950s furnished no powerful role for women—conformed. If IBM favored white shirts, sober ties, and gray flannel suits, executive trainees dressed to suit and dutifully ate no-martini lunches. As Whyte put it, middle-class careerists shared "a belief in the group as the source of creativity; a belief in 'belongingness' as the ultimate need of the individual; and a belief in the application of science to achieve the belongingness."

In Whyte's drab universe, the corporation substitutes for religion and politics. Success defines itself as upward movement in its bureaucracy. It is David Riesman's other-directed glad-handers, not inner-directed souls still responsive to the Protestant ethic, who rise. Whyte detested the spiritual sterility of those who worked, married, and lived according to the organizational code.

Reread three decades later, Whyte's polemic seems to describe Japanese corporate culture better than it does our own. Sony and Hitachi confer lifetime jobs on faithful employees, unlike *Fortune*'s 500 largest industrial operators, 100 major banks, or 200 giant retailers. In Japan, but certainly not here at home, it is bad form to change employers.

Conferences between Japanese and Americans baffle at least the latter because at meeting's end it is still mysterious who on the Japanese side is in command and what has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been decided. The Japanese value group consensus and mutual respect. Americans glorify decisive executives and clear hierarchical definitions of authority. One of this decade's unfolding dramas features the Japanese ethic in Fremont, California where General Motors and Toyota embrace in a joint venture.

GENERAL MOTORS' SATURN PROJECT breaks still more abruptly with standard American corporate tradition. Its small-car factory in Spring Hill, Tennessee, a last-ditch multibillion dollar attempt to compete with Japan's Hondas, Nissans, and Toyotas, substitutes cooperation for confrontation on the factory floor and a management-union committee substitutes for the traditional top-down, hierarchical style of the auto industry. The contrast is dramatic. In a typical 1985 GM plant, supervisors/foremen (ninety per shift) report to general supervisors (fifteen per shift) who answer to production superintendents (five per shift) who salute a single general superintendent who owes allegiance to a production manager who communicates with the man at the top, the plant manager. When Saturns or otherwise named vehicles begin to roll off the assembly lines in 1989, there will be a different set of social relationships. At the bottom of the factory's hierarchy will be work units, teams of six to fifteen men and women who elect a UAW "counselor" to lead them. A work unit module—three to six work units—will be headed by a company-selected "work-unit adviser." A business unit to coordinate plant-wide operations will include company representatives, specialists, and an elected union adviser. Union representatives will sit on the manufacturing advisory committee overseeing the entire operation and also on the strategic advisory committee charged with long-range planning. Workers will be paid salaries. Four-fifths of them will be covered by lifetime employment guarantees, save in the occurrence of "catastrophic events."

However, wages will average just four-fifths the pay of other UAW workers. As in Japan, Saturn employees will be encouraged to supplement wage guarantees with productivity bonuses. In still another sharp break with union tradition, job classifications are practically abolished. All production workers will be enrolled in a single category. Managers will acquire complete flexibility to switch people from one task to another. Saturn's imitation of Japanese practice and its organizational expression in mainland America impose fascinating pressures upon corporate behavior, and agonizing choices for yuppies. Should they bet their career prospects on calculated shifts from one employer to another or is corporate loyalty the new ticket to promotion, stock options, titles of escalating significance, and perquisites, however suitably disguised, of transcendent spiritual fulfillment? Will the psychobabble of the imminent future be translations from the Japanese?

From Gray Flannel to Green Pastures

BEFORE WE EXPLORE THE MANY MANSIONS of yuppie heaven, let us resurrect another, wildly contrasting vision, that of a nearly forgotten prophet of the 1960s, Charles Reich. Reich's subtitle to *The Greening of America* was "How the Youth Revolution is trying to make America livable." Reich's own transformation is almost as startling as the salvation of America that is the stuff of his book-length sermon. At Yale he was esteemed as an extraordinarily gifted teacher of law, and beyond the boundaries of New Haven as the author of exceptionally provocative law-review articles, occasionally cited with approval by members of a Supreme Court spectacularly different from that of the 1980s. These essays on property, government regulation, and twentieth-century feudalism contain the roots of the assault upon the corruptions of organizational power that endures as the most satisfactory portion of his book.

"The New Property," the most celebrated of these articles, focused upon governmental "largesse" as the dynamic of alteration in property relations. Under this rubric, Reich listed numerous benefits conferred by government upon groups of citizens, from welfare and veterans' benefits to agricultural subsidies and taxicab franchises.

Elected representatives and public functionaries perceive largesse as so many acts of grace, to be as legitimately recalled as compassionately extended. Beneficiaries, understandably, come quickly to esteem each boon like older

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

varieties of property, as inalienable as acres of land and the structures erected upon them. Reich's own distinction between largesse, the new property, and more traditional property entitlements focuses upon a danger to new property claimants. In general, private property originates in the economic activities of private markets. By contrast, largesse both reflects and reinforces existing distributions of political power and influence.

Public largesse enriches the wealthy and tightens the grip of the powerful. Large commercial farmers collect the bulk of agricultural subsidies. In the 1950s and 1960s, Federal Housing Administration loan guarantees financed middle-class flight to the suburbs. In depopulated cities, urban renewal (in black circles bitterly translated into charges of black removal) diminished inventories of low-cost rental housing in exchange for convention halls, new hotels, and luxury flats. When Reich wrote his book and the articles that preceded it, he noted that California's tax and fee structures combined to generate subsidies for middle-class college students financed mostly by regressive taxes levied upon their financial inferiors, for it is a law of public largesse that acute social need accompanies small political power. From that law flows an ineluctable corollary: the powerful, never the needy, collar a disproportionate percentage of the cash. Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in short order became a jobs program for middle-class professionals.

By definition, largesse can be capriciously granted and removed at the pleasure or displeasure of administrators endowed with alarming discretionary power either by congressional design, congressional inattention, or the natural disposition of bureaucrats to interpret statutes in ways that widen their own sphere of action. Communications policy exemplifies the general condition. In their wisdom, courts have ruled that the Communications Act that created the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) awarded no property right to radio or TV station operators. Licenses are mere privileges, initially granted for three-year terms and, subsequently, renewed or revoked by FCC decision. That they are also licenses to print money is beside the legal point. Congress originally may have intended license limitation as pressure upon broadcasters to meet minimum criteria of public service. But in the Nixon-Agnew era, the source of most of Reich's "horribles," as in the age of Reagan, such precariousness of tenure impressed timid network executives as sufficient reason to tone down news comment, deemphasize documentaries critical of establishment institutions, and confine the guest list on discussion programs to responsible souls slightly to the left or slightly to the right of the amorphous, dearly beloved center. Reich's point remains sharp: the networks retain enormous opportunities for profit on condition that they barter away at least part of their First Amendment right to free speech. As in the Middle Ages, property amounts to a grant conditioned upon loyalty to the sovereign.

Reich wrote at the end of a period when a Supreme Court led by strong liberals, among them Earl Warren, William Douglas, Arthur Goldberg, Thurgood Marshall, and William Brennan, moved cautiously away from definition of welfare grants to indigent families as largesse or gratuity and toward enunciation of a right to public assistance. The distinction is crucial. The awesome constitutional protection of due process envelops "rights." In the case of public welfare, one Supreme Court decision required welfare administrators to accord beneficiaries fair hearings *before* termination or reduction of benefits. Another threw out a New York statute that imposed a twelve-month state residency requirement for benefit eligibility. A third prohibited midnight raids on the apartments of welfare recipients in search of adult males cohabiting in violation of eligibility rules. For a time, the Supreme Court seemed to be nerving itself to proclaim something akin to a right to life translatable into a governmentally guaranteed income large enough to impart reality to that right.

Reich's analysis was prophetic, for increasingly, property and benefits get linked to status and status is conferred either by the state, or still more insidiously, by a small number of very large private organizations which act as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

loosely regulated agents of the state, among them corporations, foundations, and universities. The moral?

> If the individual is to survive in a collective society, he must have protection against its ruthless pressures. There must be sanctuaries or enclaves where no majority can reach. To shelter the solitary human spirit does not merely make possible the fulfillment of individuals; it also gives society the power to change, to grow, and to regenerate, and hence to endure. . . . Just as the Homestead Act was a deliberate effort to foster individual values at an earlier time, so we must try to build an economic basis for liberty today—a Homestead Act for rootless twentieth-century man. We must create a new property.

Reich's publisher anticipated so little public interest in Reich's volume that its first printing was a mere 5,000 copies. Yet this high-pitched screed turned its author into an instant celebrity. Reich extended the themes of his law review essays and celebrated his own rebirth as a child of the new consciousness. He warmed up with a catalogue of New Left charges: American society was very nearly terminally corrupted by "disorder, corruption, hypocrisy, war"; "poverty, distorted priorities, and lawmaking by private power"; "decline of democracy and liberty, powerlessness"; "the artificiality of work and culture"; "absence of community"; and "loss of self." The heavy indictment is every bit as justified today when few care as in 1970 when the country listened.

SUCH A SOCIETY INVITES RADICAL CHANGE. As always, a successful revolution requires revolutionaries. Enter the young as vessels of new revelations and heightened consciousness. Their parents and grandparents, alas, are mired either in Consciousness I, the atavistic remnants of frontier individualism, or Consciousness II, the charcoal-gray spirit of the organizational mentality, bureaucracy incarnate. Odd and sad that Ronald Reagan won two elections as a celebrant of Consciousness I and hordes of young men and women crowd classrooms in which the mysteries of accounting, financial management, computer science, and corporate law presumably are explained the better to prepare for updated versions of

HEY, WE'VE GOT THESE HUGE DEFICITS, AND THE ECONOMY'S GOING SOUR, AND THE ARMS RACE IS OUT OF CONTROL, AND WE'VE TURNED OUR BACKS ON THE POOR, BUT GOSH I FEEL GOOD ABOUT AMERICA.
WHAT'S IN THIS?
STEIN '86
ROCKY MTN. NEWS · NEA

Reprinted by permission of NEWSPAPER ENTERPRISE ASSOCIATION, INC.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Consciousness II. Sadder still that so many of the 1960s celebrants of Consciousness III now earn comfortable livings as management consultants, lawyers, and investment bankers. One of them, coauthor of a bestselling exposé of the Kennedys, revealed in print that in 1984 he had voted for Reagan out of repentance for his contribution to the wild 1960s.

Yuppies and Neoliberals

How entrancing, only a few decades ago, was the Consciousness III challenge to ersatz cowboys and prisoners of three-piece suits! The converts to the new ethos contemptuously dismissed both the asserted inevitabilities and the purported rewards of hierarchical organization. They substituted new and inalienable entitlements to joy, love, friendship, infinite openness to experience and sensation, immediate communication, and warm, oh so warm, community. As Reich barely refrained from saying in the quaint patois of the time, like oh wow!

As ever, social reality is messier than the abstract categories of scribblers. In today's yuppies Consciousness III survives, albeit less as a sense of community than as a stage of consumer culture. The yuppie version of Consciousness II combines the vocationalism of Whyte's organization men with claims to individual autonomy that remind one of the 1960s. If one strains, even Consciousness I reappears in the entrepreneurial aspirations of many yuppies. Yuppie distrust of government interference in personal life-styles and aspiration to property and wealth echo at considerable distance Reich's insistence on individual autonomy. Yuppies, as New Hampshire license plates boast, aspire to live free, but alas for Reich, not in communes furnished mostly by warm emotion, altruism, and a relentless sense of community. If the Japanese work ethos sweeps over America, the organization man may stage a strong comeback. His home base incorporates consumer items unknown to Whyte's organization man: jacuzzis, VCRs, exercycles, and compact disc players. But the spirit of consumption and the ethos of conformity endure.

Confusion is the fate of the young. Consciousness III lingers from the 1960s as hedonism shorn of Reich's apocalyptic aspirations. Little in the realm of sensation offends trend setters: drugs, X-rated movies, abortion, pornography, and of course sex, straight or kinky, with or without benefit of matrimony. Yuppies crave success and money as any old Consciousness II young fogey might but according to one of their admirers, "They are imaginative and original," display "little tolerance for boredom," expect "interesting work and satisfying emotional relationships," and anticipate "psychic and social stimulation on the job." Their distinct preference is to "manage themselves," since "taking orders . . . insults their intelligence."

Nor has Consciousness I ceased to influence the conduct of the young. The fashion at elite schools of business administration is entrepreneurship. Start your enterprise in emulation of the heroes of Route 128 and Silicon Valley and become rich and independent. Or, second best, join the large organization that pretends to be entrepreneurial by setting up quasi-independent small units under its umbrella. Self-expression, perspicaciously deployed, translates into money in the bank.

No wonder psychobabble is the popular yuppie dialect. But the yuppie horde—true yuppies, fellow travelers, aspirants, and mere followers—constitutes a political prize of enormous value. Whoever speaks most convincingly to the largest percentage of this generation may well be Ronald Reagan's successor. If a single value unites them, yuppies are prochoice—in their careers, lifestyles, and political representatives. In 1984, Gary Hart was their favorite candidate. His youth, energy, craggy good looks, indeed his very boots proclaimed affiliation with the baby boomers' passion for jogging, pumping iron, grazing, and fashionably consuming. Hart proclaimed himself the prophet of new ideas. On inspection, their origins were either neoconservative or derivative from industrial policy, itself a tendency of ambiguous intellectual sponsorship.

In their reliance upon markets, distrust of "big government," and emphasis upon growth instead of equity, neoliberals and neoconservatives converge if not coincide. Both tend to ignore an interesting fact: the federal government's share of Gross National Product has actually risen during the Reagan years, partly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because Social Security pensions have been paid to more recipients as the population has aged, but mostly because defense expenditures and the interest costs of servicing the enormous deficits, caused by them as well as by reckless supposedly self-financing supply-side tax cuts, have ballooned. One of the reasons why income is distributed still more unequally in 1986 than in 1980 is the enormous transfer of resources from ordinary taxpayers to the collectors of interest on the federal debt, most of them far better off than those whose taxes flow in their direction.

Neoliberal Dissension

ON SOME ISSUES, THE NEOS SPLIT. In Congress neoliberals share nearly flawless civil rights records with traditional liberals of the Ted Kennedy stripe. Nevertheless, implicit in their diagnosis of poverty as largely the consequence of slow growth and inadequate labor market skills is quiet endorsement of the Thomas Sowell position in the endless argument over the relative importance of race and class as explanation of the perpetuation of a large black underclass. Rapid growth encourages employers to accept and train less qualified and less literate workers, after the precedent of World War II. The payoffs for education and marketable skills in an expanding economy similarly encourage teenagers to stay in school and out of jail. Black "pathology" cures itself in the benign atmosphere of high employment. The promarket bias of the neolibs inevitably tells against cultural and political interpretations of brutally high rates of unemployment in the black community and inordinately high percentages of female-headed black families subsisting in poverty. The heritage of racism and its continuing manifestations tend to be discounted as explanations of the black plight.

IN THEIR RATIONAL, AFFECTLESS FASHION, neolibs share numerous goals with old-style libs. They do favor a decent welfare state, but their position entails no commitment to a national health program, an official Democratic position as recently as 1980. They fret over unemployment, but successfully control latent nostalgia for public jobs programs to alleviate it and never, never refer to that legislative embarrassment, the Humphrey-Hawkins Balanced Growth and Full Employment Act of 1978. Their attachment to civil rights seems to be consistent with skepticism over the more aggressive varieties of affirmative action. And their general prochoice posture on abortion is flexible enough to accommodate Representative Gephardt who, representing a conservative constituency, opposes abortion under almost any set of contingencies. Like conservatives and Democrats of the hardline Henry Jackson school, they are anti-Soviet and prodefense.

The old-fashioned rhetoric of social justice, equality, redistribution, empowerment of the weak, and full employment does not trip easily from the tongues of the Bradleys, Aspins, and Gephardts. For them, politics seems less conflict between groups than search for tax, regulatory, and mild planning initiatives that promote enough growth to soften the harsh edges of ancient struggles between rich and poor, black and white, males and females, the Sunbelt and the Rust Belt. If all of the above sketches a set of dull fellows, all too likely to glaze the eyes and turn off the hearing aids of their auditors, it is unfortunately closer to truth than to caricature.

What turns the troops on is emotion. As governor, New York's Mario Cuomo has reduced business taxes and levies on high-income families. He has been notably prudent in social program funding. He vigorously supported Westway, a favorite of New York City's bankers and real estate developers. His policies, in other words, have not significantly differed from those of his Massachusetts colleague, Michael Dukakis, a stylish neolib, or his opposite number in New Jersey, Thomas Kean, a temperate moderate Republican. But millions of people in the summer of 1984 watched and heard him deliver a passionate keynote address to the assembled Democrats in San Francisco. It was a traditional liberal appeal for justice complemented by an equally traditional assault upon the Republicans as the party of the rich and privileged. The hardened politicians in the huge auditorium actually listened, cheered, and seemed prepared to nominate Mr. Cuomo for president on the spot.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PASSION ELECTS PRESIDENTS. Jimmy Carter, an apparent exception to the rule, won narrowly in 1976 because his opponent Gerald Ford displayed even less emotion and aptitude for public speaking than did Carter. He lost in 1980 to a virtuoso prestidigitator of traditional symbols—patriotism, individualism, opportunity, freedom from meddling government, not terribly different from Carter's 1980 themes. Indeed, for three national campaigns in a row, Democrats and Republicans, whether incumbents or challengers, have run against big government, just as though they did not yearn to head it.

Can a neolib make it to the White House next time around? It is not impossible. Charismatic is neither the first nor tenth adjective that even their admirers attach to George Bush, Howard Baker, Robert Dole, or Jack Kemp. All but Kemp tried unsuccessfully to get the Republican presidential nomination in 1980, and in so doing encountered nearly universal popular apathy. No living soul can sensibly forecast the condition of the economy in 1988 but it is unlikely to be buoyant. Quite probably, recession in 1987 and 1988 will succeed the sluggishness of 1985 and 1986. As foreigners sour on American prospects, the flow of funds that in the first half of the decade financed rearmament, huge budgetary deficits, and equally unprecedented deficits in international trade is fated to slow. Interest rates accordingly will rise, push new homes out of the reach of middle-income families, and complete the destruction of independent farmers. Deficits, unless Gramm-Rudman is permitted to wreak its mindless destruction of federal activity, will have compelled the White House to accept new taxes. Yuppies find themselves in industries like data processing, computer services, banking, law, advertising, and public relations that are especially vulnerable to recession. Many of them, by now in their early forties, are parents and homeowners, burdened by debt and kept barely financially afloat when both spouses are employed. Not only is Ronald Reagan constitutionally unavailable as a third-term candidate, by now his popularity, come 1988, could well sink to Carter levels and Democrats rather regret his departure to the golden West.

Can Neoliberalism Succeed?

[At this point there is a shrewd and ironic "fantasy" about American politics in which Gary Hart is elected as president in 1988. The author describes the kind of appointments Hart is likely to make and the kind of policies he is likely to adopt—more or less along neoliberal lines. We wish we had the space to include it all here, but lacking that, we urge our readers to turn to the book. Meanwhile, the story continues.—Eds.*]*

BY THEMSELVES, YUPPIES ARE NOT NUMEROUS enough to elect a president. Nor do they share a single allegiance either to neoliberal ideology or neoliberal contenders. Hart's triumph was made possible by the lowered expectations of traditional Democrats, inveterate Republicans, and a drifting mass of weakly affiliated or nonaffiliated voters. Chastened by the Reagan administration's mixture of hostility and indifference to their aspirations, blacks were moved to support almost any Democrat capable of recapturing the White House.

Recognizing the mood of his troops, Jesse Jackson, after making loud, threatening noises, decided not to repeat his 1984 candidacy, and to endorse Hart. The National Organization for Women, not yet recovered from the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment campaign, was comfortable with Hart, whose record on freedom of choice, ERA, funding of food stamps, and child nutrition was flawless.

The unions' role in Hart's victory was inevitably subdued. An overvalued dollar, antiunion crusades by numerous industries, creative deployment of bankruptcy to discredit unions by unilateral reduction of wages and benefits, lack of success in organizing service workers, pervasive two-tier wage schemes well calculated to pit veterans against new workers, and blatant sabotage of collective bargaining by an employer-controlled National Labor Relations Board, had combined to drive down the union share of the labor force to its lowest figure since the 1920s. Its Mondale fiasco taught the AFL-CIO to avoid early endorsement of any Democrat and although many unionists preferred Cuomo to Hart, they had no trouble choosing Hart over Bush or any of the other Republican lightweights. At best,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hart was half a loaf. His version of industrial policy was unlikely to be as protectionist as the AFL-CIO's major industrial unions wanted and his high-tech image made them uneasy about the intensity of his commitment to the rescue of the industrial midwest. Still, Hart's early appointments, his initial judicial selections to vacancies on the federal district and appeals benches, and the replacements he seemed poised to choose for retiring or dying Supreme Court veterans, reassured unions that at the least the new boys and girls, unlike their predecessors, listened to Lane Kirkland and shared many union aspirations.

The second half of Reagan's final term had dampened conservative euphoria. The religious right threatened to sit out the 1988 election or, worse, nominate their own candidates. Pat Robertson, a thriving television evangelist who heals the sick and speaks in tongues, had offered himself in Republican primaries as the Christian savior. George Bush averted a third-party run by Robertson only by painting himself into a still tighter corner on pornography, drugs, school prayer, pure textbooks, and right-to-life. Frustratingly for Falwellites and Robertsonians, Congress managed to smother antiabortion and proprayer constitutional amendments. Although Ronald Reagan spoke as eloquently as ever against abortion and in celebration of prayer, Moral Majoritarians could not help noticing that Nicaragua, the Pentagon budget, the threat of higher taxes, all seemed higher priorities for Reagan than the piety of school children and the lives of the unborn.

The national mood was sour, but not hopeless. For a space, the public seemed prepared to wait for the benefits of experiments in industrial policy, substantial shifts in tax and spending priorities, and modest voucher, enterprise zone, and training accounts experiments. In 1982, at the depth of a minidepression, Ronald Reagan had appealed to the voters to stay the course.

Would the public be equally patient with a president less endowed with Reagan's grip on public affection? Hart's political chips were bet on three risky propositions. The first was the hope that the shift to fiscal restraint, even though mitigated by an easy credit policy by the Federal Reserve, would not plunge a weakening economy into deep and prolonged recession. The second was the prospect of quick returns on a new economic policy in the shape of a cheaper dollar and a better balance between imports and exports. Still more problematic was the restructuring of the American economy initiated in the automobile industry in Fremont, California, where General Motors' joint venture with Toyota was under way, in Detroit where Mazda had made a deal with the UAW, and in Tennessee where General Motors seemed to be betting its future on the success of a $3.5 billion gamble on Saturn. Was this the model for the industrial policy recommendations of the Iacocca commission? Were rearranged exchange rates, managerial renewal, and a new spirit of cooperation between labor and corporations enough to restore the bloom of health to the sallow countenance of American capitalism? Affirmative answers to these queries all but guaranteed a second Hart term, continued Democratic control of Congress, and reaffirmation of the neoliberal vision of America—its gingerly compassion, preference for free markets in life-styles as well as consumer goods and public services, and caution in foreign affairs.

Anything But Socialism

In American politics, almost anything, aside from outright socialism, is possible. It may be that in the wake of the most ideological president in our history, the public would welcome neoliberal emphasis upon technique and process and the suspension of crusades at home and abroad, particularly if the economy's readjustment is brief and not too painful. Neoliberalism fits comfortably into the tradition of pragmatism. For unknowing disciples of William James, the important question to ask of any human effort is, will it work? If vouchers improve the quality of education, increase the quantity of low-income housing, and widen access to medical care for the poor, let millions of vouchers bloom. As with vouchers, so with pollution metering instead of legalistic regulation, contracting out of public services to low-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bidding profitmakers, individual training accounts in place of government-sponsored programs, and, even possibly, for-profit medical care in preference to public or voluntary alternatives.

Numerous successful politicians, playing neoliberal games, are almost as skeptical about the efficacy of large-scale government action as Ronald Reagan himself. Unlike him, they also identify in their constituents a yearning for the sort of public intervention that protects peace-loving citizens from criminals, environmental damage, unemployment, nuclear accidents, catastrophic medical bills, indigency in later life, and so on, with as little intrusion by fussy officials as possible. The apparent contradiction between enthusiasm for a great many government services and income maintenance efforts, and generalized distrust of government can be resolved by breaking the link between financing and delivery of traditional public services. Medicare and Medicaid pay a high percentage of the for-profit medical sector's bills. If the users of for-profit hospitals judge that they are better treated as customers of profit maximizing enterprises than as patients of nonprofit institutions, then the former deserve to expand their market share and the latter to shrink in importance.

Health care, however, highlights a major neoliberal defect. Social Security survived eight years of a president with an earlier record of strong opposition to it, because pension benefits flow to nearly everybody and above all to the vast, amorphous middle class. Universal entitlements create enormous constituencies in favor of their continuance. The neoliberal approach is tacitly hostile to national health, comprehensive welfare reform, large-scale public job and housing ventures, and similar national solutions, on grounds of principle and political practicality alike. Yet American and British experience makes it abundantly clear that services for low-income and otherwise vulnerable groups will be second-rate or unavailable whenever and wherever access to them is means-tested. In laissez-faire Victorian England, public health legislation was enacted only after it became clear that the plagues of the poor spread on an equal opportunity basis to the affluent. Then and only then did London purify its water and install sewer systems. In the next century, free medical care for miners, a reform jointly sponsored by David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, was generally inferior to that available to the middle class and affluent. It took a universal program in the wake of World War II, the British Health Service, to raise standards for the poor. In the United States, public housing from its inception in the 1930s has been closed to all but low-income families. Council homes, the British equivalent, have been open to middle-income as well as poorer families. No surprise that council housing has a generally good reputation and public housing does not. Means-tested benefits inflict stigma; universal benefits are popular entitlements.

By now, the process should be drained of mystery. Segregate any group as the objects of public charity. Tempt conservative politicians and media allies to stigmatize them as cheats. Target welfare, Medicaid, food stamp, and public-housing recipients for frequent investigation. Subject them to complex and humiliating qualification requirements, frequently baffling even to those who administer them. Then discover that some overpayments have been made. Conceal the news that numerous clients have received *less* than they are entitled to. Then whenever Congress or a state legislature needs to cut spending, start with means-tested programs.

Unlike their opponents on the political right, neoliberals do not by preference stigmatize the poor. They recognize the legitimacy of decent social provision. All the same, their distrust of large-scale, universal programs and attraction to market mechanisms lead ineluctably to segmented service delivery. Yet again, health care is paradigmatic. Legitimization of for-profit hospitals, nursing homes, dialysis centers, and health maintenance organizations also sanctions a hierarchy of accommodation and, inevitably, nursing care that trails downward from luxury suites to ordinary private rooms, semi-private accommodations, and wards of varying size, according to the financial resources of individual patients. The economic approach to health care assimilates it to any other commodity or service in the market-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

place. Naturally, the rich will fare better than the poor. They will enjoy wider choice of physicians and superior hospital care. The hospital chains will gladly contract with the federal or local governments to treat the medically indigent on terms that simultaneously economize on public expenditures and pay suitable dividends to stockholders. Under the cloak of rationality the functional equivalent of old-time charity medicine completes a comeback begun by Reagan.

What remains of the welfare state after eight years of Reagan reaction will be threatened by the social accounting of neoliberals. Viable social arrangements, public or private, flourish in an ideological atmosphere of solidarity. Human solidarity enlists familial affection, solicitude for neighbors, and concern for still larger and more distant groups. If their marriages endure, husbands and wives do not cast monthly accounts of the extent to which the larger of two incomes subsidizes the recipient of the smaller one, nor do they set monetary values upon cooking, cleaning, and other household duties. Departments of accounting, management, and computer science subsidize colleagues who teach unpopular courses in philosophy, foreign languages, and art history. Sensible members of fashionable departments moderate their grumbling partly out of fellow feeling for colleagues and partly out of the sense that a university bereft of concern for culture, history, and the roots of human conduct is indistinguishable from a trade school.

As with families and university faculties, so with the communal enterprise of popular government. The principle of progressive taxation requires affluent citizens to contribute more substantially than the less prosperous. Federalism entails complex patterns of state contribution to Washington and equally complicated flows of subsidies and other expenditures from Washington to states and local jurisdictions. With much encouragement from politicians eager to score local points, citizens in Iowa are led to wonder why they should underwrite New York City's buses and subways. New Yorkers reflect that food prices would be lower if a portion of their taxes were not devoted to propping up markets for Iowa's corn and wheat.

Calculation is fatal to comity. Families, voluntary associations, professional societies, and political entities quarrel and disintegrate when they focus narrowly upon who pays and who benefits. Harmony requires peaceful acceptance of cross-subsidization and the humility to realize that in most lifetimes most individuals at some times are subsidized and on other occasions contribute to subsidies for others. Young workers whose Social Security deductions have alleviated the poverty of their elders will in time collect retirement benefits financed by workers who are young when they are old. Thus far, a bit more than half a century since that August 14, 1935 when Franklin Roosevelt signed into law the Social Security Act, all retirees have been collecting far more in benefits than the actuarial value of their own and their employers' payments to Social Security trust funds.

Social Security as Social Contract

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S ALARMIST cries over impending "bankruptcy" of Social Security have shaken the confidence of younger workers that they will collect full benefits twenty, thirty, or more years hence. In truth, the more prosperous of Social Security beneficiaries have during their working careers contributed enough to pay the least affluent retirees most generously of all. Younger workers have made intergenerational transfers to senior citizens, some of whom are far more prosperous than they are. The payment and benefit pattern has endured both because, at least until recently, the young expected to gain from it in due time and because few were inclined to examine in close detail exactly who was subsidizing whom. So examined, Social Security is unfair on both the revenue and expenditure side. Payroll taxes are regressive. Since a single rate applies to wage and salary income and does not apply to earnings above $40,000, the corporate vice president paid $400,000 is assessed the same amount as a colleague collecting a mere $40,000. As a percentage of salary, his tax is one-tenth that of his hierarchical subordinate. Moreover, the larger the individual income, the more substantial the proportion of it derived from dividends, interest, and capi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tal gains, not a dollar of which is subject to Social Security levy.

On the expenditure side, Social Security benefits replace higher percentages of earnings as those earnings move downward. A pensioner who gratefully retires after four decades of steady but ill-rewarded work will receive monthly checks that are a much larger proportion of his recent earnings than will better-paid retirees. In other words, the system is progressive in its outlays: the more lucrative was your working career, the less significant as part of your Golden Years resources will Social Security be. There is less logic than there is political wisdom in these arrangements. That they have endured so long testifies to public acceptance of the system.

It should be glaringly clear that tampering with either side of the ledger risks an open season of interest group conflict. Well-paid professional and managerial workers will judge that they could earn much higher rates of return from their and their employers' contributions if they were allowed to invest these sums in common stocks or real estate.

The social costs of rational investment are heavy. An Individual Retirement Account option would at a stroke destroy the universal character of the present system. Retirement rewards will be strictly associated with income performance. Low-paid workers will require supplements to the amounts they have earned from either the Social Security trust fund or their own small IRAs. In effect, welfare will supplant current, dignified income-maintenance provision, much as Medicaid to the dismay of many middle-class patients finances long-term nursing home care only *after* assets have been all but dissipated in order to establish eligibility. As conservatives indignantly charge, Social Security does embody an element of income redistribution. Indeed, this is one of its major contributions to decency. Practically everyone gets more than the actuarial value of lifetime contributions and low-income families benefit most. There is an intergenerational transfer and probably another between affluent and less affluent beneficiaries.

I have lingered upon Social Security because here as elsewhere neoliberal like neoconservative logic draws upon the wrong social science—economics instead of sociology. Economists proficiently calculate costs and benefits for individuals operating in efficient markets. Insofar as the scholarly imperialism of economists is allowed or actually encouraged by politicians to reshape social policy, it is almost certain to reinforce existing distributions of income and wealth. Lacking any old-fashioned passion for social justice and possessing far too rational attitudes toward public policy, neoliberals are quite capable of reshaping policy in much the same direction as supply siders and neoconservatives, not out of ideological fervor but out of solicitude for efficiency, international competitiveness, faster economic growth, and intellectual tidiness.

Neoliberalism perpetuates Reaganomics by other devices. It tears at the frayed fabric of group harmony. Losers will continue to have a hard time. But, worse still, neoliberal intervention is unlikely to succeed in good part because rewards are directed to groups that constitute a good part of the problem. The plain fact is that corporate managers have been excessively compensated for nearly two decades of demonstrated incompetence. Policies that further reward them dangerously miss the point. Japan has prospered without lavishing million dollar salaries and multimillion dollar compensation packages upon its executives. To rival Japan requires devotion to educational achievement and sharing of collective aspirations and rewards in ways alien to the individualism legitimated as much by neoliberalism as by its conservative rivals.

On several grounds, neoliberalism is preferable to the nightmare of four, eight, or more years of Reaganism. Crusades against abortion and for public school prayer no doubt will continue but without White House encouragement. Defense policy should be less expensive and foreign policy less chauvinistic. Blacks and Hispanics will not be totally ignored because no Democrat can become president without substantial minority support. Electoral calculation will inevitably modify economistic impulses. Neoliberalism is less a nightmare than a recipe for uneasy sleep, an interlude between right-wing activism, Reagan style, and, just possibly, revival on the political left. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roy Medvedev

Bits of Light in a Gray World

Cultural Life in the Soviet Union

Certain changes in the USSR's domestic and foreign policy, the swift replacement of high-ranking leaders, the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, and, of course, the Chernobyl disaster have riveted all attention, causing little notice to be paid to the recent changes in Soviet culture that became increasingly distinct in 1986. These changes have an importance that is not confined to themselves. They reflect political moods and currents and, in turn, influence the development of political currents, and even movements. Without studying the changes in our cultural life at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, it is difficult to understand many of the important political events of the last twenty years, including the dissident movement with all its various leanings and shades.

No one denies that in the 1970s the USSR's rate of economic growth began to slow to the point of stagnation. But in those years the situation was even worse in the realm of culture; one would have to describe it in terms of decline, not stagnation. Of course, the creation of spiritual values continued even during the last fifteen years. The creative intelligentsia continued not only to search but to discover, taking pleasure in new books by Aitmatov, Bykov, Astafev, Zhigulin, and Okudzhava, to name but a few. There were even some good films: *Red Berries, The Belorussian Station, Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears, Your Son, O Earth,* and *A Train Station for Two.* I will not speak of music, architecture, and the fine arts, which registered practically no achievements.

The main reasons for the changes in the culture—changes for the worse not the better—were the worsening of the political and moral atmosphere in the society, a step-up in pressure on the intelligentsia, the fear of all novelty and talent, and the encouragement given to aggressive mediocrity. Many doors were closed to the creative intelligentsia, though those to the West were opened a bit. For various reasons, the following people, a list by no means complete, became émigrés: Rostopovich, Solzhenitsyn, Vladimov, Nekrasov, Brodsky, Aksyonov, Kopelev, Zinoviev, Lyubimov, Tarkovsky, Neizvestny, Rabin, Voinovich, and Etkind. Many talented people focused their attention on subjects far removed from the present. Others have simply been silent for a considerable time. And death has claimed a good many of our best people in the last fifteen years, including Tvardovsky, Romm, Tendryakov, Trifonov, Shostakovich, Abramov, Simonov, Bek, Khachaturian, and Dumbadze. Vysotsky and Shushkin died before they had reached the age of forty-five.

We suffered losses of another sort as well. A good number of talented cultural figures, having won the popularity they deserved in the 1960s, were either unable or unwilling to withstand the pressure exerted on them and began going not *against* the current but *with* it, betraying the truth of art in favor of the official embellishment and distortion of reality. Such compromise of conscience allowed some of these people to assume high positions in the cultural hierarchy but ruled out the possibility of their creating works of artistic value. The names of Yevtushenko and Bondarev will suffice in this context. "I want the good life too,"—this was said openly and cynically by one of the people who made the false and ostentatious epic film *The Liberation.*

The departure of so many talents from our culture, albeit for various reasons, has not been matched by the appearance of new talents. Of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the hundreds of poets accepted into the Writers' Union in the last fifteen years, I would be hard pressed to name even one whose lyrics and long poems could have won nationwide attention. And among the prose writers, I could name only one—Valentin Rasputin. Vampilov was probably the sole playwright to earn a major reputation and that, unfortunately, came after his tragic death. In this regard, the enormous success enjoyed by Pikul's "historical" trash and by Standyuk's and Chakovsky's pseudo-historical novels demonstrates a degradation not only of the writer's craft but of the reader's taste as well.

When surveying the path taken during the last fifteen years, many of our major cultural figures now voice very critical opinions:

> Now, as never before, we are drowning in a sea of the illegible, the unexacting, spiritual illiteracy—Valentin Rasputin.

> I am tired of the mediocre fiction, all the grayness which fills our magazines and which our publishers publish. I would rather see documentary films than any dramatic trash.... For a very long time we have been producing a literature that is oversimplified and glossy. Often, the times compelled this. But to no less a degree this was the work of the mediocrities whose writings created an atmosphere without principles or standards—Astafev.

> The principal reason for the decline in the theater is a general and not only a literary one. When there is a great deal of half-truths, ostentation, pomposity, superficiality, and plain hogwash, it's hard for the truth to shine through.... With each passing year we are increasingly deluged with novels of no use to anyone but their authors, paintings that are even of no use to their painters, films striking in their lack of artistic personality, and songs that can neither be sung nor listened to. Our art is like our commerce: you won't find what you need and you won't need what you find.... One feels like hurling at this art the accusation that it "does not belong to the nation." It touches neither the nation's genuine joy nor its pain—Roshchin.

Equally critical observations on the decline in the opera were recently made by the Soviet National Artist, Pokrovsky, on the decline in stage shows by the composer Zhurbin, the decline in architecture by the artist Kumankov, and the general decline in culture by Academician Likhachev. The appearance in the press of such criticisms attests to a change in Soviet culture, one which in part began spontaneously and in part is a reflection of the struggle taking place on the political level. Not only criticism is on the increase; the country's entire cultural panorama is slowly changing.

At the end of the 1950s after the Twentieth Party Congress, the changes in society's atmosphere found their most immediate reflection in poetry. Of course, today too certain lyrics and even long poems by Yevtushenko and Voznesensky have been the center of great attention, but this was not so much a poetic as a political phenomenon. In the last few months it has been only at the readings given by Zhigulin and Okudzhava that one could hear genuine civic poetry. In the past year only works of prose captured all the critic's attention: Rasputin's novella *The Fire* and Astafev's novel *The Sad Detective*. These are outstanding works which just two or three years ago might have been rejected by publishers as "slanderous."

Changes in Television

SOVIET TELEVISION HAS BEEN MORE ENERGETIC in responding to the changes in the political atmosphere. Until now, interesting programs were a rarity here; most of what was shown was old, boring films, and only sports events could draw a large audience. As a well-known writer put it, when he watches television he feels like hurling an iron at the screen. But now television is starting to show movies it had not shown before and to broadcast some interesting spectacles. An absorbing and pointed interview was done in March 1986 with Academician Likhachev, a representative of the moderate liberal wing of the Soviet intelligentsia. A tremendous stir was caused by the program "Problems—Research—Solutions," in which leaders of industry, agriculture, and science were asked questions by telephone. In two hours the studio took down 800 questions, some of which clearly made the ministers and academicians uncomfortable, unaccustomed as they were to "accounting" to an audience of millions. There was also a good response to the new program "The 12th Floor," which is aimed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at a younger audience. On one program devoted to problems at school young people spoke about their personal freedom and rights as they applied to their lives at school. Even the "punks" had a chance to have their say, those extremist and unprincipled adolescents between fifteen and seventeen whose very existence was denied in the USSR just three or four years ago. A deputy minister of education was there to answer the children's questions and sometimes did not seem at all confident in doing so.

A television debate—"Leningrad-Seattle"—took place in the spring of 1986 in which the Americans spoke openly about their concern for human rights in the USSR, and about Poland and Afghanistan. Their Soviet opponents strove to parry the attack by condemning the American way of life. To believe our press, the Soviet side "won" the debate. But the majority of viewers in Moscow thought that the Americans had gained the upper hand.

Notable changes for the better have occurred in local television as well, for example in Georgia and Stavropol, where I recently spent a month. The viewing audience in Stavropol looks forward to a special semi-monthly program called "Television's Satirical Lens."

In a word, changes are being felt in nearly every realm of culture. If it's a question of what's in first place in culture, there can be no argument that in 1986 it was the theater, primarily that of Moscow and Leningrad. Many of the plays staged last season not only enjoyed great success in attendance but were widely commented upon by the country's leading newspapers and magazines. But why the theater?

Responsiveness of the Theater

Undoubtedly, because the theater is one of the most "efficient" forms of art. A new play can be created more quickly than a new film or novel. Just a year ago the government took strong steps against alcoholism, but, by fall 1983, the country's theaters were running some twenty plays on the fatal effects of alcohol. During the last fifteen years it has been the theater that has suffered the fewest losses in personnel. Literature is a very individual matter, which is both its strength and its weakness. Films are made by a group that disperses after the film is complete. But the theater rests on a stable group that forms solid traditions, styles, and schools. Theaters function in good times and in bad when novels by excellent writers are being rejected by publishers and film directors are without work and without pay. It is not surprising then that it was the theater that in the last ten years produced the group of young and talented playwrights and directors who have been called the "new wave." It was, of course, difficult for these people to work in the stifling atmosphere of the last Brezhnev years, and their experiments were usually limited to subjects of personal confusion and "marginal" people. The theater posed more questions than it answered but, at the same time, it was mastering new styles and learning the lessons of Western drama. And this helped the theater begin a restructuring more rapid than has proven possible in fiction, film, music, or the visual arts.

As we have seen, the theater has been able to "survive" in the age of movies and television. All the same, the last fifteen years have seen a decline in Soviet theater. Theater attendance has decreased and, on average, Soviet theaters are only 70 percent full. In the Russian republic alone, there are more than 70 theaters which could sell only 50 percent or fewer of their tickets. Theaters in the Russian republic had a million fewer customers in 1984 than in 1983. This decline in the theater is explained not by the competition from film and television but by the low level of the performances and the boring plays, a situation that is changing.

The greatest successes in the 1985-86 season were enjoyed by fifteen to twenty new plays. These include Stavitsky's *No. 40 Sholem Aleichem Street* at the Stanislavsky theater in Moscow, a play which, albeit in distorted form, raises the issue of the reasons for Jewish emigration from the USSR. It is hard to get tickets for Radzinsky's *The Theater of Nero's and Seneca's Time* at the Mayakovsky theater in Moscow. Events of ancient history prove relevant to the contemporary playgoer as well. Burlatsky's *Only One Night* staged by the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Moscow Satire Theater was also noteworthy. The play's main heroes are the intelligent and decisive John Kennedy and his noble and charming brother, Robert, winning a difficult victory over the American "hawks" during the Cuban missile crisis. Strangely, Krushchev is not among the cast of characters, though without the part he played, the Cuban crisis would neither have arisen nor been safely resolved. The Contemporary Theater has revived one of its previous stagings, *The Bolsheviks* by Shatrov, as if to build a bridge between the 1960s and the 1980s. Several theaters have staged successful performances of Kudryatsev's *Ivan and the Madonna* and Dozorsky's *The Last Visitor*. Dodin, a stage director with the Leningrad Dramatic Theater, mounted stage versions of Abramov's novels *The House* and *Brothers and Sisters*. These plays cause the audience to think not only about the hardships suffered in the countryside after the war but also about the life lived in all rural Russia, and the life of the whole nation.

THIS LIST COULD BE EXTENDED, but three plays were the main events of the season, both in artistic and political terms. First, there is the Moscow Art Theater's performance based on Masharin's play *The Silver Wedding Anniversary*, which had been thoroughly reworked by the theater. The Soviet Ministry of Culture had long denied permission for its staging and only after Politburo member Ligachev attended a performance was the play allowed into the repertoire. Gorbachev also attended a performance, as did many of the delegates to the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress. The play's subject is not a complicated one. Vybornov, an important figure in Moscow, travels to a small and remote provincial town because his mother has fallen seriously ill. According to newspaper reports, he has been released from his position "pending a new job" but he has not received his new assignment. Vybornov is sixty-five years old and had begun his career in that small town—during the war as the head of a tungsten mine and later as the secretary of the district and provincial committees. As he rose, he brought "his own" people up with him. The current secretary of the district committee, Vazhnov, was his former chauffeur, and Goloshchapov, the chairman of the district soviet, had once been his assistant. Vybornov had always given them support in times of trouble. His mother is dead when he arrives and, after her funeral, Vybornov unexpectedly shows up at the home of Vazhnov, who is celebrating his silver wedding anniversary with his guests. All the action takes place in the new, enormous house that Vazhnov built with Goloshchapov's help, based on fictitious cost estimates.

Vybornov has not been to his home town in twenty years and is indignant at much of what he sees. The district's agriculture is in decline, and only one wealthy collective farm remains, whose chairman, Siry, is related to Vazhnov and is a guest at the celebration. All the district's affairs are in the hands not of the rather stupid Vazhnov, but of the clever and cynical Goloshchapov, a bribe-taker who has sent Poletaev, editor of the local newspaper, to prison for attempting to criticize the authorities. Goloshchapov is an overt Stalinist, and his ideal is "order" based on fear and constraint.

> How many years did we lead, mobilize, and support the people? And was it all for nothing? To turn back now? To restore things back to what they were? Personal garden plots are a step back! Livestock for personal use is a step back! Soon we'll have reached the point of giving the land back. We're overstimulating the people. . . . We've spoiled the people.

In Goloshchapov's opinion, dissatisfied machine operators should not be given prizes but prison sentences.

Indignant, Vybornov cries out at the festive table:

> How far are you people going here? Do you think I can't see it? That I don't understand? You little tsars! You local pashas! Only in it for yourselves! All that matters is that you keep your chair! And your power! Have you forgotten what it's all about?! And why you're here in the first place? . . . You're an evil force!

Vazhnov's conscience begins gradually to awaken and he is even ready to give up his house and let it be turned into a kindergarten. But he also reproaches Vybornov:

> You ran your policy like it was your own too. Whether it was cruel or democratic, loyalist or voluntarist, doesn't matter. You ran it like it was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your own! I know, I worked for you! I lived by your ideas and what you said.

The same is said to Vybornov by Siry, the kolkhoz chairman, reminding him of Goloshchapov's machinations which Vybornov had encouraged at one point, and of Vybornov's friendship with the swindler, Berendeev, whom Vybornov had recommended for the post of Province Committee Secretary and who had recently been dismissed from that post. Vybornov had already known about the arrest of their former friend, Poletaev, the editor, but had not found the time to look into the case.

There is another character in the play—Vybornov's dead mother, who appears on the stage as a ghost and as memories, saying to her son:

> Everything's different now. No one listens to anyone else! All people care about is themselves, themselves! Have you really become like that too? It's terrible, Gena, the life you people lead. You've forgotten your soul and your conscience! Wake up! This is your mother speaking to you!

At first distracted, but then with increasing confidence, Vybornov repeats what his mother has said to him: "Power without conscience is shameless." He leaves for Moscow to assume a new high post but now he will do his job differently. The play's main thrust, which so pleased Ligachev, was that Vybornov would rid himself only of the most incorrigible coworkers and the rest would do their duty differently, with the exercise of conscience.

THE PLAY CONTAINS MANY ALLUSIONS, some which are not clear to all. It opens to music written by the composer Mynbaev based on Pushkin's poem "The Possessed," lines from which Dostoevsky used as the epigraph to his novel *The Possessed*, whose theme was the degeneration of revolutionary ideas and of the revolutionaries themselves. But the audience is well aware whom the roguish Goloshchapov has in mind when he says:

> I sometimes wish that he could come back from the dead and take a look around! And not just at our district. But at the whole world, the way he knew how. With that eagle eye of his. In one go, "from boundary to boundary, along the mountain tops," so to speak.

At one point, in kindergarten or grade school, we all learned the song about Stalin, "From Boundary to Boundary, Along the Mountain Tops." And the audience also responded with laughter to Siry's bitter joke: "In the spring we plant seeds, and in the fall we harvest . . . plenums." Siry also exclaims, "And their own Soviet state takes more from the muzhiks than the money lenders used to," though the Soviet audience knows that the money lenders crushed the countryside with debts way before the revolution.

District life is depicted in another play worthy of mention, the stage version of Ovechkin's book *District Days*, which started the "village prose" school in the 1950s. The play—entitled *Say It*—was staged by Fokin, a young director at the Ermolov Theater in Moscow.

In the opening scenes we see a poor village in 1952, tyrannized by the all-powerful and unscrupulous District Committee Secretary, Borzov, whose main task is not the growing of grain but the taking of it from the kolkhozniks. Stalin's death changes the village and Borzov is replaced by a new leader, Martynov. But the vestiges of "Borzovism" do not disappear immediately. Martynov spends day and night on the kolkhozes but believes that all important decisions should come from above. And when a kolkhoz meeting removes the kolkhoz chairman from office because of his drunkenness and even expels his cronies from the party, in disregard of the District Committee's recommendation, Martynov views this as a "revolt" and as impermissible anarchy. To deepen its analysis, a new character was added to the play, the Writer, the young Ovechkin, who enters into a polemic with Martynov, defending the people's rights.

Say It! is possibly the first play to have not only raised the issue of the party's responsibility but its guilt to the people for its poor leadership. In the final scene, speakers at a party conference read speeches whose texts had been written the previous year. A milkmaid is reading a report but Martynov takes the text away from her and says: "Say it! If you have something to say, say it!" But, not used to speaking, the woman says nothing. At this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point, a group of actors symbolizing the people begins walking back and forth on the stage, repeating one thing over and over: "Say it!" The moral is simple—until the people begin to speak, there will be no changes.

The third notable play of the season, *The Dictatorship of Conscience*, was performed by the Lenin Komsomol Theater. As in others of his plays, the author, Shatrov, builds his action on the contrast between Lenin's ideas and what has happened since his death. The performance takes the form of a "courtroom" debate, after the revolution a favorite form among young people for defending their ideas. In this case, the "courtroom" is the editorial offices of a contemporary youth newspaper. The "prosecutors" attack the reality of the communist world; the "defense counsel" and the "witnesses" present their versions; and the "objective judges" issue their verdicts. Of course, in the end it is Lenin's ideas that gain the upper hand, but the very idea of putting them in doubt and allowing the enemies of Leninism to speak their piece seemed blasphemous to the Ministry of Culture and it was only the intervention of Politburo member Ligachev and the Central Committee Secretary Yakovlev that enabled Shatrov's play to remain in the theater company's repertoire.

THERE IS ONE SPECIAL CHARACTER in the play, the *Outsider*, a part played by Yankovsky. During the initial performances, he also addressed the audience, drawing them into the debate as well. One of the spectators who rose to speak, said: "My grandfather was a socialist and a Menshevik. He was executed in the 1930s. We talk a lot about democracy these days. But experience tell us that there can be no real democracy as long as there are no opposition parties." That was the end of audience participation. "Openness," both in Lenin's understanding of the term and in the current understanding, is far from any assumption of freedom for an opposition. The stage presents an interesting but well-rehearsed debate; society's real life still lacks genuine democracy. □

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY RICHARD LOURIE.

U.S. Postal Service
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1A. TITLE OF PUBLICATION	1B. PUBLICATION NO.	2. DATE OF FILING
DISSENT	0 0 1 2 3 8 4 6	Oct. 1986
3. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE	3A. NO. OF ISSUES PUBLISHED ANNUALLY	3B. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE
Quarterly	4	$15.00

4. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION (Street, City, County, State and ZIP+4 Code) (Not printers)
Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc.
521 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10017

5. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF THE HEADQUARTERS OF GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHER (Not printer)
521 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10017

6. FULL NAMES AND COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR (This item MUST NOT be blank)

PUBLISHER (Name and Complete Mailing Address)
Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc.
521 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10017

EDITOR (Name and Complete Mailing Address)
Irving Howe - Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc
521 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10017

MANAGING EDITOR (Name and Complete Mailing Address)
Maxine Phillips, Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas
521 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10017

7. OWNER (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.) (Item must be completed.)

FULL NAME	COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS
Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc.	521 Fifth Avenue New York, New York 10017

8. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES (If there are none, so state)

FULL NAME	COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS
NONE	

9. FOR COMPLETION BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORIZED TO MAIL AT SPECIAL RATES (Section 423.12 DMM only)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes (Check one)

(1) ☒ HAS NOT CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS
(2) ☐ HAS CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

10. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION (See instructions on reverse side)	AVERAGE NO. COPIES EACH ISSUE DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS	ACTUAL NO. COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUE PUBLISHED NEAREST TO FILING DATE
A. TOTAL NO. COPIES (Net Press Run)	8,450	8,550
B. PAID AND/OR REQUESTED CIRCULATION 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	2,670	2,800
2. Mail Subscription (Paid and/or requested)	4,948	4,858
C. TOTAL PAID AND/OR REQUESTED CIRCULATION (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2)	7,618	7,658
D. FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MAIL, CARRIER OR OTHER MEANS SAMPLES, COMPLIMENTARY, AND OTHER FREE COPIES	302	354
E. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (Sum of C and D)	7,920	8,012
F. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing	530	538
2. Return from News Agents	0	0
G. TOTAL (Sum of E, F1 and 2—should equal net press run shown in A)	8,450	8,550

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete

SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EDITOR, PUBLISHER, BUSINESS MANAGER, OR OWNER

PS Form 3526, July 1986 (See instructions on reverse)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Kuttner

Will Unions Organize Again?

Why Some Succeed & Others Don't

He looks like Central Casting's idea of an organizer. Domenic Mario Bozzotto, president of Local 26, is bearded, olive-skinned, tieless, with the bravura and streetcorner patois of a Damon Runyon tough guy, but also the sweetness of a parish priest. At this moment, on a Tuesday morning in December, he has brazenly commandeered a conference room in Boston's Park Plaza Hotel, where his negotiating committee of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) will shortly commence the fifth session of contract talks, now deadlocked against a strike deadline of Saturday midnight.

When the management team walks into the room, at eleven sharp, the workers will already have been there for two hours, psyching themselves into a unified force, signaling occupancy of the turf. Bozzotto's committee, eighty strong, is a mosaic of races and colors, reflecting the Haitians, Cambodians, Salvadorans, Filipinos, first- and second-generation Irish and Italian-Americans, blacks, and WASPs who serve the meals, change the linen, wash the dishes, and pamper the guests in Boston's nine unionized luxury hotels. Local 26 routinely prints leaflets in Spanish, Creole French, Vietnamese, Cambodian—and English.

As the talks approach the strike deadline, it is guerrilla warfare time. Management has demanded a two-tier wage system for the first time, with new hires getting 25 percent below the standard rates. The union says nothing doing; the union wants raises, and more conscientious enforcement of management's paper commitment to promote women and people of color out of the laundries and slop sinks, into the front-of-the-house "gratuity" jobs like waiter and bell captain that permit middle-class earnings.

Management has assembled a force of strikebreakers, flown into town from New York and Chicago. Management plans to put the strikebreakers up in the hotels for the duration, give them their own private lounge, with beer and wine and video games. The union knows this because the union has a complete file of management's memos. The union has been preparing for this contract deadline for three years, and has its own guerrilla warfare, including a sophisticated corporate campaign against the John Hancock company, part owner of several Boston hotels, even bringing demonstrators to the homes of Hancock executives.

"I'm very proud of you," Bozzotto is saying. "If it takes bringing the strike to their houses, that's what we're gonna do. At the Hilton, they're already bringing in the scabs. Some of the scabs had the nerve to ask our people what the job was. Well, the biggest job they have is to get out of town!"

Loud cheers.

"Over at the Ritz, we hear that they're getting ready for the strike with paper plates. They want to convince you that they can run the place without you; that you can't win. You know what? The Ritz, they're not gonna serve anything on paper plates."

Laughter and more cheers.

"We're going to defeat the concessions. We're going to raise our standard of living. We're going to protect our job security. All of us have to be in the cafeterias, making sure our own people aren't coerced into scabbing." Bozzotto holds up a union petition calling on management to settle: "If you work in a hotel and you haven't signed my solidarity petition, whatever you say, I know in my heart you're a . . ."

"SCAAAAAB," yells the committee.

"And when Security says you can't go into the cafeteria, we look Security in the eye and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we say, 'I'm on the negotiating committee.' We want management to understand we're in control."

Ultimately, Local 26 will win, and win big. Parades of workers carrying banners will play tag with hotel security, marching in one main lobby and out the other, astonishing guests. Boston's populist mayor, Ray Flynn, will have his police chief quietly pass the word to the hotels that in the event of strike disruptions, the Boston police will not do management's dirty work. Eventually, management will drop its demand for a two-tier system; management will even come across with a modest raise. There will be no strike. Dozens of workers from as yet ununionized hotels, invited by Bozzotto to the contract talks, will come away impressed.

BOZZOTTO IS THE SORT OF UP-FROM-THE-RANKS labor leader who seems to prove there is still lots of life in the labor movement. The son of Italian immigrants, he lived most of his life in working-class East Boston. He began working in restaurants at 13, setting out glasses of water. Working as a waiter, he put himself through college at night. He married a black woman, got active in the civil rights movement, and in 1981, at age 40, he led a rank-and-file revolt to take over the local, ousting the incumbent three to one. "Before 1981," says Bozzotto, "there was tremendous segregation by classification. The term 'back-of-the-house' meant black-of-the-house. We opened the union to everybody. We added eight full-time organizers."

Bozzotto's rise in Boston coincided with the rise of Vincent Sirabella, now the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' national director of organizing. Sirabella believes organizing must become the top priority for the entire labor movement. He made Boston one of HERE's priority cities, sending in flying squads of organizers to help the local. His union triumphed against difficult odds in New York and Las Vegas concession negotiations. It also organized 2,600 clerical workers at Yale University. In Boston, under Bozzotto, Local 26 has organized two new hotels, and targeted six more. One at a time, it has organized about a thousand new Boston workers.

"Hotels are vulnerable," Bozzotto says. "They can't relocate; they can't have a two-for-one sale. They can't stockpile; there's only 365 days in the year, and the guest might go someplace else. They can scab all the workers they want, but they can't scab the guests. We've taken a work force everybody says can't be organized, and we've organized them. When we took over, this union hall was like a bank vault. It was so clean you could eat off the floor. Nobody was ever in here.... Now the place is alive with activity."

To observe Local 26 in action is to work oneself into an optimism about the vitality of a newly emerging labor movement, a movement beginning to learn how to organize the new low-wage service economy of women and minorities, one that makes room for the raw talent of natural leaders like Bozzotto, and demonstrates the rich possibilities of empowerment of ordinary working people through a democratic union local.

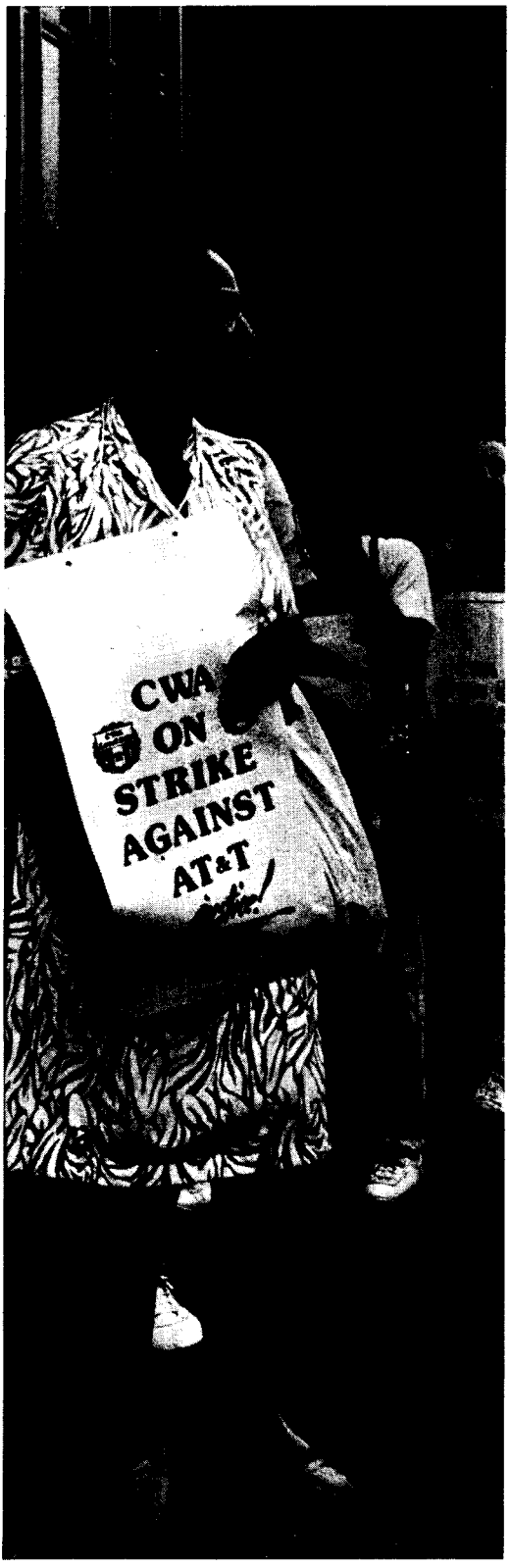
Yet, the larger story remains more discouraging. Bozzotto illustrates the promise, not the widespread reality, not yet. If one pulls back, to a wider angle lens, the reality is dozens, perhaps hundreds of dedicated men and women like Bozzotto, a few of them making real headway, but in an all-but-impossible larger context. The reality is that the labor movement, taken as a whole, is doing far too little organizing for its own survival.

External and Internal Obstacles

IN THE 1980S, NEW UNION ORGANIZING BRINGS in only 100,000 to 200,000 private-sector members a year, compared to 750,000 a year in the 1950s. In 1984, according to the AFL-CIO, the labor movement organized about 150,000 new private-sector workers, and about 200,000 in the public sector. But in the same year the labor movement lost about 700,000 workers from plant closings, automation, layoffs, and decertification elections, leaving a net loss of 350,000, or about 2 percent of its total membership. Just to maintain current membership, unions must double their rate of organizing wins.

As any unionist will tell you, much of labor's problem is "external." International compe-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Michael Kaufman/IMPACT VISUALS

tition, deregulation, and industrial transition, all have devastated seemingly impregnable labor strongholds like autos and steel, airlines and trucking, leaving many unions inward-looking, defensive, and institutionally conservative. The structure of the economy is tilting away from unionized sectors, into nonunion ones. Unions have been doing relatively well enlisting public-sector workers, where elections are generally uncontested by management, but public employment is not currently a growth sector. In private employment, the unionization rate is now below 15 percent. The service sector, accounting for more than two out of three new jobs in the economy, is only about seven percent unionized. In electronics, the main growth sector within manufacturing, the unionization rate is about 2 percent, and most of that is in longtime union companies like GE, Raytheon, and Xerox, not in new high-tech firms.

SINCE THE LATE 1970s, corporate America has gotten serious about busting unions. The National Labor Relations Act has ceased to be labor's bill of rights, and has become a positive obstacle to organizing. Protracted delays at the NLRB and anti-union rulings permit management to fire pro-union workers almost with impunity, wrecking organizing drives. Reagan's appointees to the labor board have made a bad situation worse. By 1980, the union win rate in NLRB elections had fallen below 50 percent (from 74 percent in 1950), and in only about half of the victories does the union ultimately gain a contract. In large units of more than 100 workers, just one organizing election in seven ultimately produces a union contract.

Yet to focus on external factors, real as they are, lets the labor movement off the hook far too easily, for it is never really an easy time to organize a union. The more troubling difficulty is that precious few unions are serious about organizing. The external problems—the decline in blue-collar employment, the hostile NLRB—are only "peripheral" factors, says Vince Sirabella of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees. The deeper problem, he observes, is that a whole generation of labor leaders, spanning 1950 to 1980, all but abandoned organizing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The reasons have to do with both ideology and with internal union politics. The sort of young radicals who will work long hours to organize out of ideological conviction are unwelcome in many unions. Internally, within most unions, the servicing of existing membership consumes over 95 percent of resources. Most of what union officials do, day in and day out, is to monitor contracts and process grievances. The career union leader, who rises from local elected official or shop steward to become a business agent or an international representative and eventually a regional officer, typically rises through the ranks because he is good at resolving grievances and at pursuing ever-better contracts for the established membership, not because he organizes new units. Although most of the AFL-CIO's top leadership will agree—in the abstract—that the labor movement as a whole must "organize or die," little practical machinery is aimed at that objective. The oft-heard line, "We have to take care of the membership we've got" could well be the epitaph of the labor movement.

"The sad truth," says Martin Manley, who has worked as an organizer in California's Silicon Valley, for the machinists, the service employees, and the hotel and restaurant employees, "is that most unions are perfectly capable of gradually shrinking into mere service organizations. The logic of just becoming a service organization is relentless. Despite all the rhetoric, there is not much internal pressure to organize."

"Organizer is the most talked about and least honored job in unions," says Marshall Ganz, who was for over a decade the organizing director of the United Farm Workers union. For the past year and a half, Ganz has been investigating why labor unions do so little organizing, using California as a laboratory.

Ganz pulled all the documents that California unions are required to file with the Labor Department. He and his associate Scott Washburn then conducted in-depth interviews with over 100 California union officials. He was appalled to find that in the entire state of California, the labor movement fields just 180 paid organizers, or about 2.4 percent of its total paid staff. Half of these are in public-sector unions, leaving just 96 full-time organizers for 6.75 million unorganized private-sector workers. The largely unorganized service sector, the fastest growing part of the economy, had the fewest organizers per capita of all. By contrast, in the great farm worker drives of the 1960s, the farm workers organizing committee fielded nearly 300 organizers. Ganz estimates that the California organizer figures are actually slightly better than the national average.

"Organizing," observes Ganz, "is generally seen as the *least* important activity in most unions. It is not a 'way up'; top leaders don't identify as organizers. It is low-paid, poorly esteemed work, reserved for the novice or the political crony, while business agent is considered 'making it.' As a result, organizers get frustrated. They get tired of turning their people and their work over to political leaders who often fail to share their vision.

"Many unions have taken an activity—organizing—that is inherently missionary, and they've bureaucratized it. There is very, very little strategic thinking, and little collaboration between unions. Instead of picking a strategic sector in one locality, say, health care in Los Angeles, and going all out, there's a little nibble here and a little nibble there," Ganz says.

A FEW UNIONS ARE THE EXCEPTION TO THIS picture—Bozzotto's Hotel and Restaurant Employees, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the National Union of Hospital Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), as well as some regions of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), and the Communication Workers of America (CWA). Here, if you are young and idealistic, somewhat radical, deadly serious about organizing, and willing to work for $300-400 a week, you can perhaps find a home.

The SEIU is a good example of a union that seems to be doing everything right, and making modest headway. Despite the discouraging external context, SEIU has achieved goals that have eluded most unions. At a time when most unions are shrinking, it is growing—from some 600,000 members in 1980 to 850,000 today.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

About half of them are in the public sector and half in the private, though the major organizing gains are in the public sector. SEIU places a very high priority on organizing; out of a $30 million national budget, nearly $10 million goes for organizing. SEIU seems unafraid of young, often fairly radical organizers, and it recruits them, for modest pay, from community organizations and citizen movements as well as from the workplace rank and file. SEIU is also more strategic in its organizing than most unions, which frequently pick ad hoc targets of opportunity rather than engaging in long-term planning.

FOR EXAMPLE, SEIU TOOK THE LEAD in a three-union cooperative drive to organize nursing homes owned by the Beverly chain, the nation's largest for-profit nursing home operator. Before a single organizer began knocking on doors, SEIU, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and the hospital workers union (Local 1199), conducted more than a year of corporate research, working with the AFL-CIO Food and Allied Service Trades department, and devised a novel campaign investigating Beverly, relying on state nursing home inspection reports and Medicaid reimbursement records, as well as going after Beverly's sources of financing on Wall Street.

The corporate campaign identified a vulnerability—Beverly needed huge infusions of capital to continue expanding. By calling into question the quality of Beverly's patient care, labor could jeopardize the company's business plan. It became cheaper for Beverly to settle. When the unions finally reached an accord with the firm's national management committing Beverly to stop interfering with union organizing, the development of these unconventional pressure points was a key to the union's leverage. "They agreed to stop impeding our organizing," recalls Gerry Shea, director of the union's health care division; "we agreed to stop impeding their expansion." The national agreement stipulated elections within forty-five days after a majority of workers at a nursing home signed cards, circumventing NLRB delays. Even so, however, SEIU and UFCW have managed to sign up only about 10 percent of Beverly's 1,000 nursing homes, and management continues to chisel on the deal whenever it can. Beverly may indeed be the strategic breakthrough it is widely held to be, but it is a double-edged success that illustrates just how arduous labor's path will be.

According to Bob Welch, the union's chief of staff, labor's next big breakthrough will have to be "a mass organizing movement within a whole industry," such as health insurance. In this spirit, SEIU was the main impetus behind the AFL-CIO's recently announced nine-union campaign to organize Blue Cross/Blue Shield, which SEIU president John Sweeney chairs. Sweeney hopes the Blue Cross/Blue Shield drive will point the way towards other multi-union campaigns in which the AFL-CIO serves as a clearing house to agree on targets, train organizers, and pool resources. (However, in the inevitable inter-union turf battle, several key regional Blue Cross targets were awarded to internationals whose commitment is half-hearted at best.)

SEIU has also grown by affiliating quasi-unions, such as state civil service associations, helping them to develop into full-blown unions; it has built District 925, a spin-off of the feminist clerical group Nine-to-Five, as a full-fledged district of the union, with about 5,000 newly organized clerical workers. It has been willing to put substantial resources into clerical organizing, even though the short-term payoffs are fairly meager numerically. SEIU also affiliated an independent 2,000 member union called United Labor Unions (ULU), associated with the community action group ACORN. Mark Splain, the former welfare rights activist and Massachusetts Fair Share organizer who was a co-founder of ULU, is now national director of SEIU's health care organizing. "We're approaching organizing in very nontraditional ways," says Splain. "Most people look at contracts in terms of wages and benefits. Money is important for our health care workers, but we're not organizing people around money. Much more important are working conditions and patient care."

In one county Splain has targeted thirty major nursing homes, preceding actual worker organizing with a three-year research analysis

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of wage rates, staffing ratios, per-patient expenditures, occupancy rates, administrative costs, dietary outlays, and profit levels. "We put it all on spreadsheets; I know more about those homes than some of the operators," Splain says. "Now we can begin knocking on doors."

SEIU as an Example

MUCH OF THE EXPLANATION FOR SEIU'S agressive stance is in its history. SEIU was originally a union of building service workers—janitors, cleaners, window washers, and the like. "Although it was part of the AFL," says Bob Welch, the SEIU's chief of staff, "the union had a culture that saw itself not as a craft union but as a general union of fairly low-skilled, low-paid service workers. It was always a multi-ethnic union, with a long tradition of local autonomy and democracy."

Representing building-cleaners, the union found early in its history that it could succeed in raising wage levels only by organizing every cleaning company in a city. "In the building service business, wages make up most of a contractor's cost," Welch says. "In order to organize anybody you have to organize everybody. Otherwise the nonunion contractors simply underbid you."

Another source of the SEIU's commitment to organizing seems to be the fact that it straddles the public and the private sectors. Conventionally, some organizers in private-sector unions look down their noses at public-employee unions, as creatures that are not quite "real" unions, thanks to civil service protections and generally uncontested elections. However, the other side of that coin is the fact that turning a public-employee organization into a genuine union requires constant organizing of the potential membership pool, to persuade them that belonging to the local is worthwhile, even though membership is seldom a condition of employment. "Part of why the good public sector unions like SEIU have stayed so dynamic," says Marty Manley, "is that they have to fight day in and day our for their membership."

In Los Angeles, the SEIU flagship is the big county workers' Local 660, with some 40,000 members. Local 660, formerly a rather passive civil service association, offers a good example of how SEIU goes about organizing the *organized*. Since 1979, under the pressure of the Proposition 13 austerity climate, the local has built an impressive force of shop stewards, fought against contracting-out of public employee jobs, and has also made common cause with the electorate to defend the quality of public services.

"We hired a team of organizers," recalls Phil Giarizzo, the thirty-four-year-old one-time college drop-out who took over as the local's new general manager in 1983. "We asked our members what problems they were having on the job, what problems they had with the union, and what the union should be doing for them. I met with the 'dissidents.' I found out that all they wanted to do was build a union. I found that there had been no membership meetings; there were no structures that invited participation; no rank-and-file workers had been involved in bargaining." New issues emerged: sex and race discrimination; rights of temporary workers; frustrations about wasteful and inefficient management; and worker dignity. The union adopted a new slogan: "We're worth it."

In the 1983-84 bargaining round, the local felt sufficiently confident to trade away its coveted "maintenance of membership" clause—the contractual equivalent of a closed shop—for better salary and benefits. "It was never something that the membership wanted," says Giarizzo. "It was only something convenient for the leadership. We went totally open shop, and we signed up 3,000 new people. This way, I know month to month exactly how we're doing."

SEIU has been able to use its public-sector base to help finance the far more costly organizing of private-sector service and clerical workers. Thus, within its limited sphere, SEIU has begun to accomplish something that has eluded the labor movement as a whole—the transfer of resources from well-unionized sectors, like local government, to sectors with few labor beachheads. The task, however, is immense, and even a fifty-person organizing staff, though large for a union of SEIU's size, is a drop in the national bucket. "We can organize

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anybody, if we're willing to spend enough money," says Bob Welch. But even ten million dollars doesn't go very far in today's organizing climate. "We used to think fifty dollars a head was an expensive campaign," Welch adds. "Now it costs five times as much because of the protracted time it takes to do it right."

AFSCME, like the SEIU, is also devoting substantial energies to organizing, and is gaining membership. AFSCME's total membership has grown from about 950,000 in 1980, to 1.1 million in 1986. Of the 150,000 new members, about 50,000 resulted from mergers; the rest were organized from scratch. AFSCME devotes about one-third of its national budget to organizing and has an organizing staff of over 250. Although almost exclusively a union of government employees, AFSCME hopes to use the leverage it has through its members' health insurance coverage to persuade Blue Cross/Blue Shield management to remain neutral in the drive to organize the big health insurer.

While flagrant and illegal union-busting of the sort rampant in the private sector is not a problem in the organizing of public workers, nonetheless the public employee unions are not immune from the generally anti-union climate. In a few cities the unions have had to wink at temporary workers during what should be permanent jobs in order to protect the salary levels of full-fledged civil service workers. This is the public-sector equivalent of the two-tier work force, and if it spreads it could seriously undermine public-worker unionism. Privatization is a source of constant erosion of membership and salary levels. Typically, when a public service is contracted out, the salary and benefit package drops by about a third. The public-employee unions have begun to organize the newly privatized work force, with only modest success.

Bleak Prospects in High Tech

IF THERE IS CAUSE FOR GUARDED OPTIMISM in clerical and service organizing, where some unions are at least expending resources and thinking through strategies, the other major emerging industry, electronics, is an organizing desert. In the high-tech field no union has yet emerged to play the forward looking role of an SEIU or HERE. In centers of high-tech industry, like California's Silicon Valley, or Boston's Route 128 corridor, there have been a few small forays by individual organizers, but no serious commitments of resources by major unions. A typical high-tech firm includes a fairly elite force of engineering and design employees, who are generally well paid, conscious of their professional status, and skeptical about unions—and a low-paid force of production workers, often female and Third World, with notoriously high turnover. The famous paternalism of the high-tech industry keeps the high-end workers unreceptive to unionism; the turnover and the ethnic divisions make it very difficult to organize the low end.

Experimental efforts by organizers for the Communication Workers of America (CWA) and the United Electrical workers (UE) to develop networks of high-tech workers, as "pre-union" associations, have produced plenty of meetings, but no organizing successes. After nearly a decade of spadework, high-tech workers' associations in Silicon Valley and in the Route 128 corridor around Boston have both virtually ceased operations.

Another recent failure illustrates just how difficult it is to crack high tech. At Wave-tek, an Indianapolis manufacturer of advanced microwave equipment, the CWA in 1983 devised what seemed a novel and promising strategy. Instead of circulating union cards and looking towards an NLRB certification election, CWA set up an office across the street from the plant, and began pursuing worker issues without worrying about its formal status as bargaining agent. The union used both local people from an aggressive Indianapolis CWA telephone workers' local and two full-time organizers paid by the international. The strategy seemed promising for a time, but the company struck back by contracting out work, changing job classifications, laying off workers, and even setting up a rival anti-union "rank-and-file" committee. After eighteen months and an expenditure estimated at $250,000, CWA gave up. Word of failure spreads. No union has the resources to keep subsidizing targets that don't promise eventual members, and no union is currently spending serious money on high tech.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

High tech seems a somewhat special case of what ails the labor movement generally. Marty Manley, who was once the head of the AFL-CIO's political operations in Santa Clara County, the heart of Silicon Valley, says, "Organizing high tech will require an expensive commitment over a long period of time, and most union leaders just don't think it can be done. You run into the fact that most of the labor movement is not very good at organizing Third-World people, or women."

Some organizers insist that it is a self-defeating mistake to mythologize "high tech" as a uniquely difficult field to organize. Richard Rothstein of ACTWU, an immensely talented organizer who led that union's successful campaign to organize the J.P. Stevens company, says, "What is 'high tech'? There is no such thing as high tech. We represent a number of plants in electronics production, and the work is no more 'high tech' than other production work. The reason why few people are organizing electronics plants is that few people are trying to organize anything."

Rothstein, now the manager of ACTWU's California joint board, takes pains to remind the interviewer that old-fashioned organizing was the key to the Stevens success. "People think you can come in and think up gimmicks rather than doing the hard work. Most of the work is unglamorous. You have to make a lot of house calls. You can't work a nine-to-five schedule. The only time you can talk to workers is when they get off work. A good organizer has to work weeknights and weekends. It takes a fanaticism that few people have. Only people who are ideologically committed will do it, but not all ideologically committed people will do it."

As Rothstein talks, the main activity in the ACTWU hall this Thursday morning in East Los Angeles is the distribution of free bags of groceries to unemployed and retired garment workers. Elsewhere in the union hall is a meeting that typifies the sort of organizing that must succeed if the labor movement is to reverse its long, slow decline.

ACTWU has just won an election to represent workers at California Headwear, a Los Angeles maker of baseball caps. The workforce is mostly Hispanic, from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Colombia. The pay is $3.35-3.60 an hour. The workers sew seams on caps, using industrial sewing machines. The embroidering machines are a touch of high tech—they are computer controlled. Surprisingly, although minimum-wage work is often associated with short-term, casual employment, many of the workers have been there for several years. The unionization campaign began abruptly, after a fight between two workers and a supervisor. Within a few weeks, workers had turned to ACTWU; and after an intense ten-week organizing drive, supported by community churches, the union won a representation election, 54-39.

As a reporter visits, there is good news and bad news to discuss with the inplant negotiating committee. The good news: The NLRB has just officially certified ACTWU as bargaining agent. The bad news: company layoffs are continuing, in no particular seniority order, and it is not entirely clear whether they will be judged an unfair labor practice, or when workers will be recalled. Apparently, the company is bringing in more caps from Taiwan, adding only the embroidered patches in L.A.

Shelly Coppock, an ACTWU organizer, who acquired her fluent Spanish working in Mexico with the American Friends Service Committee, chairs the meeting. Coppock holds up the NLRB certification, like a hard-won trophy. But, she adds, it will take a long time to get a contract. It could take months. One must have *algo de paciencia. Todo depende en el presión económica que nosotros podemos poner.* The economic pressure on the company includes plans for a boycott, at Dodger Stadium, and at *Disneylandia*. The union will contact Headwear's customers. Other unions will help. The company, for its part, has threatened to make the layoffs permanent. It has threatened to call in immigration inspectors (that, ironically enough, would be an unfair labor practice; if management didn't demand green cards before the union, it can't demand them now, though that would be small comfort in a raid.)

The negotiating committee, she adds, is central. *Ustedes son los que tienen que explicar.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You are the ones who must explain things. The people have to be kept informed of what is going on.

After questions, the meeting closes with a *canción*, words and music composed by a Guatemalan, a resident of the community and volunteer organizer, who must be given the pseudonym Javier. Javier, who is about four foot six, hoists his guitar, and sings in a haunting trill:

Adelante, compañeros y compañeras
. . . . adelante que la victoria sera nuestra. . . .

Tenemos que estar presentes
y tendremos que florear
como el maiz en nuestro campo
como el sol en primavera
nuestro contrato llegara!

We have to enlist, and we shall flourish. . . . Like the corn in our fields, like the sunshine in spring, our contract will come.

The sense of solidarity, and struggle, and romance, is impressive. Again, as in Boston's Local 26, one senses a bit of the militant union movement of yore. It is striking that even in the most intractable of organizing conditions—luxury hotels with elaborate caste systems and ethnic rivalries that should keep workers divided, and minimum-wage garment factories where non-English speaking workers are vulnerable to all manner of harassment, people like Shelly Coppock and Domenic Bozzotto are actually organizing workers.

Why So Few Organizers?

THE TROUBLE IS, THERE ARE FAR TOO FEW such organizers, too few unions willing to make organizing the priority it should be, too few unions receptive to the young radicals who make good organizers, too few unions willing to commit massive resources for the long term, and too few unions able to look beyond parochial concerns about turf.

"In our interviews," says Marshall Ganz, "we found a union culture built on the positive values of loyalty, trust, helping people, and sticking up for the underdog, but which seriously discourages effective organizing—of either existing members or of new members. We found a culture of powerlessness, a general demoralization, and a siege mentality. Most local leadership is elected, and they define their roles primarily in political terms, with the membership as the electorate and the staff as civil service or political allies. Without a strong missionary sense, politics takes priority over competence, and not rocking the boat drives out risk-taking and imagination. This mentality also discourages development of new leadership which could be a political threat."

A CWA organizer observes bluntly, "A lot of local union officials are not so enthusiastic about organizing new units, because it could turn out to be somebody else's power base, not yours."

For example, in an epic donnybrook last year, the CWA, the hospital workers, the Teamsters, and AFSCME all fought each other to organize Ohio public employees who had recently won collective bargaining rights under a new state labor law. When CWA made early gains in preliminary elections, AFSCME poured in dozens of organizers, and spent millions of dollars on mass media advertising. CWA, meanwhile, was plagued by its own local union officials who were not at all sure that they wanted a massive influx of new members. In the wake of the Ohio campaign, which saw AFSCME emerge as the big winner, several senior CWA organizers quit. This one CWA campaign—against other unions, not against management—probably cost more than all its private-sector organizing.

Big unions also pour organizing resources into drives to annex small unions in declining industries. Such affiliations are not unlike corporate mergers; they create the illusion of growth, but they add nothing to labor's strength as a whole, and they consume resources that might better be spent organizing new workers. In these campaigns, far too much money goes to buy the allegiance of officials of the target union, who are looking for the security of jobs on the staff of a larger, merged body. "We tried to bring in 15,000 people from the telegraphers union, at Western Union," says the CWA organizer disgustedly. "We ran into IBEW, UAW, and the Machinists. The game is—who will offer the most staff jobs with the biggest salaries to the most hack officials."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In another recent debacle, the UAW forced the resignations of a longtime organizing staff at Harvard University headed by Kristine Rondeau, who had been working for nine years to organize Harvard clerical workers, and had painstakingly built a 500-worker organizing committee. There had been long-standing cultural and tactical differences between the local Harvard organizers and the UAW hierarchy.

Last August, the UAW sent in officials to oversee the local Harvard staff. As tempers flared and trust evaporated, UAW supervisors one day changed the office locks; and the local organizing staff headed by Rondeau took home files, ultimately regrouping as an independent union. At Harvard, difficult enough for one union to organize, there are now two rival aspiring unions, one with most of the ground troops, the other with most of the financial resources. Rondeau, however, won a round when the UAW region voted out the longtime regional director who had been unsympathetic to her organizing drive. What still remains is to win the campaign.

From Rondeau's perspective, the UAW regional office, dominated by middle-aged men and oriented toward a force of factory workers, had little affinity for organizing young, female clerical workers, and turned routine tactical decisions into tests of loyalty. From the UAW viewpoint, the local organizers were making progress too slowly, and were not sufficiently loyal to the UAW as an institution. Barbara Rahke, the UAW official sent in to take over the Harvard drive, says the local organizers bogged down, and developed a parochial and grandiose view of their work: "This campaign became more than just a drive to organize Harvard; it became a mission."

It is a curious criticism. To recall the words of ACTWU's Richard Rothstein, or of Marshall Ganz, good organizers precisely need to be missionary. If one did not believe in the historic importance of the work, one would not tolerate the low wages, long hours, setbacks, and abuse. Harvard illustrates a central dilemma of unionism in the 1980s. Few unions are entirely comfortable with the militant personalities of good organizers, or the cultural shifts required to organize unfamiliar industries, or the internal political dislocation necessary to shift massive resources to organizing. As Ganz observes, successful organizing must rock the institutional boat.

Organizing, of course, threatens the status quo most acutely when that status quo most needs disturbing. It is the most tired unions that most desperately need new organizing—and are most likely to fear it. As Domenic Bozzotto puts it, "You often hear that the membership resists new organizing. That's all wrong. The problem is the leadership. When you organize new people, it changes the complexion of the union. The leader may think his job is less secure. But that attitude is suicidal."

Few top union leaders would disagree with that, but only some of them seem fully committed to brokering the institutional shifts necessary to convert the present labor movement into an organizing movement. Many of the top national and regional leaders of most unions are products of the "business unionism" compromise of the 1950s and 1960s, in which class consciousness and militance were traded for a comfortable place in the postwar social contract. That generation is finally giving way to a more militant generation, whose consciousness is colored both by the political radicalism of the 1960s and the economic frustrations of the 1970s. What remains to be seen is whether this transition can come fast enough to arrest labor's continuing decline.

The AFL-CIO's February 1985 blue-ribbon report on the future of work, the first real long-term strategy document in a generation, illustrates how fragile are the seeds of real change. To its credit, the report acknowledged that labor was in serious trouble, and that organizing had to become the labor movement's top priority. "The AFL-CIO report is a healthy development," Ganz says. "It's the first acceptance of responsibility. But the labor movement still lacks a coherent strategy."

The report recommended experimentation with "new approaches to represent workers," as a strategy of bringing unionism to workers in regions and industries where labor is not yet strong enough to win NLRB elections as bargaining agent. Individual unions are experi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

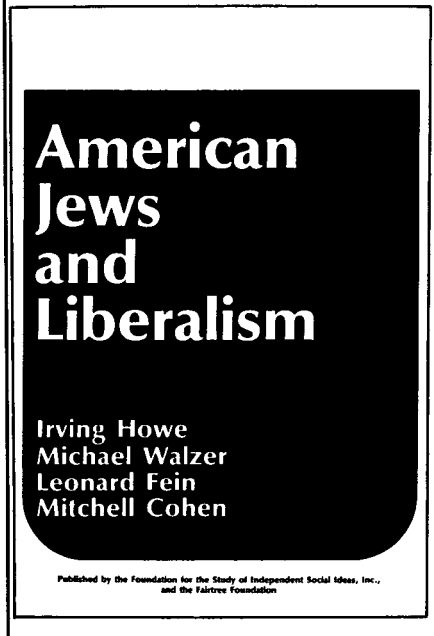
menting with a variety of such models. The bricklayers, America's oldest union, hopes to penetrate the anti-union Southwest by organizing bricklayers' co-ops. In Massachusetts, the electricians union is organizing a professional association for nonunion electricians, offering them health benefits and discounts on tools. In several states, the teachers union offers associate member status to teachers outside formal bargaining units.

The report called for a "mechanism for resolving organizing disputes." And last February, in the wake of the Ohio fiasco, the AFL-CIO council surprised its critics by approving a tough, compulsory arbitration system that will award a single union exclusive rights to attempt to organize a particular unit. This borrows the old CIO system, which worked fairly well to keep the new industrial unions of the 1930s out of each other's hair. "It will prevent future Ohios," says Charles McDonald, the AFL-CIO's new director of organizing.

The report also endorsed corporate campaigns, experimental industry-wide organizing committees, better training of organizers, more internal democratic participation, and more effective public relations. The AFL-CIO is currently developing a package of economic benefits including cut-rate travel, insurance, and even a low-interest union Mastercard, as inducements to market unionism to associate members.

The risk of this bread-and-butter approach is that it doesn't quite add up to the militancy and union consciousness required for successful organizing. In the era of business unionism, material appeals drove out militance; it is not clear that a different set of material carrots will bring back militance. It might be better if union members had the political consciousness and sense of solidarity to tax themselves to finance mass organizing drives. An additional twenty dollars a year from each AFL-CIO member would produce a $250 million organizing war chest. But such a proposal was missing from the future of work report.

As Bozzotto, Rondeau, Rothstein, Coppock, and countless others show, it is still possible to organize people, even in a climate of industrial transition, union baiting, and diminished resources. If the mainstream labor movement can make room for more such people, and give them real support, then the labor movement can revive. If not, all the public relations campaigns and all the mass merchandizing of unionism will be futile gestures. □


American Jews and Liberalism
Irving Howe
Michael Walzer
Leonard Fein
Mitchell Cohen
Published by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc., and the Fairtree Foundation

CONTENTS:

Jews and Liberalism, by Michael Walzer
Compassion and Commitment, by Irving Howe
Affirmative Action, by Leonard Fein
Politics of Complexity, by Mitchell Cohen

Published by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas in cooperation with the Fairtree Foundation. $2 per copy; $1.75 per copy in bundles of 2 to 5. (Special rates on larger orders.)

Order from:
F.S.I.S.I.
521 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Murray Hausknecht

The Secret Life of Capitalism

The Stories of A.H. Robins and the Manville Corporation

In 1971 the A. H. Robins Company purchased the rights to market the Dalkon Shield, an intrauterine device. The doctor who developed it and conducted the original research on its effectiveness and safety was an owner of the company that sold the rights, and he received a royalty on all Shields subsequently sold by Robins. His financial interest in the success of the Shield was kept well-hidden. Although his research on the device's effectiveness and safety was soon exposed as a technically shoddy piece of work, it continued to be cited by Robins in its advertising, books the doctor wrote, and in planted newspaper and magazine articles. By 1974, after three million women here and abroad (mostly in Third-World countries) were fitted with it, the government forced Robins to withdraw it from the market.

Not only was it an ineffective contraceptive, it also caused many miscarriages, killing fifteen women. Shield wearers were also highly susceptible to "pelvic inflammatory disease," and in the years following its removal from the market "tens of thousands" of women suffered from the infection that was fatal to eighteen of them. (Reliable data for foreign women are hard to come by, but since Robins continued to sell the IUD abroad after it was banned here, the number of women affected must be very high.) Finally, in 1984 Robins consented to a notice recalling all Shields still in use.

Almost from the very beginning the company's executives knew the Shield was ineffective and a health hazard. They consistently denied having any knowledge of its dangers, but the evidence produced in the course of lawsuits against Robins shows that the company deliberately suppressed the information.

Robins is not unique; it was merely following the normal practices of the industry. Two recent books, one by Paul Brodeur on the asbestos industry, the other by Morton Mintz on Robins and the Dalkon Shield, show how pervasive these morally dubious practices are.*

By the early 1930s there was good evidence that workers in the asbestos industry were contracting asbestosis, an incurable lung disease. By the 1950s, further studies showed a strong relationship between asbestos and lung cancer, and in 1964 there was "incontrovertible evidence" that it caused cancer among asbestos insulation workers. The 1964 study proved that asbestos was a danger not only to those in the industry but to anyone—World War II shipyard workers, for example—who came into contact with it. The finding precipitated an avalanche of lawsuits against the Manville Corporation (formerly Johns-Manville), the industry's largest company. These suits and others that preceded them led to the discovery, as did the Dalkon Shield lawsuits, that the industry and its insurance companies had been aware of the hazards and had systematically kept them from their workers and the public. The evidence of large-scale cover-ups led to generous jury awards as compensation for injuries and punitive damages. In an attempt to avoid payment of these and anticipated future claims, Manville sued for bankruptcy, a ploy later adopted by Robins.

**Outrageous Misconduct: The Asbestos Industry on Trial*, by Paul Brodeur. New York: Pantheon Books. 374 pp. $19.95.

At Any Cost: Corporate Greed, Women, and the Dalkon Shield, by Morton Mintz. New York: Pantheon Books. 308 pp. $17.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The similarity between Robins and the asbestos industry extends to details. In the mid-1950s the Industrial Hygiene Association, an organization largely financed by the industry, conducted an epidemiological study of lung cancer among asbestos miners. When the study was reported in a medical journal, the authors dropped a section discussing the relation between asbestosis and lung cancer. Earlier, in 1948, the health director of Johns-Manville in Canada surveyed 708 workers and found that only four had healthy lungs and seven showed early signs of asbestosis. He reported to the company that he had not told the seven workers of their condition,

> for it is felt that as long as the man feels well, is happy at home and at work, and his physical condition remains good, nothing should be said . . . as long as the man is not disabled it is felt that he should not be told of his condition so that he can live and work in peace and the Company can benefit by his many years of experience.

Women were viewed in much the same way by the executives at Robins. It took them eleven years after they stopped selling the IUD to begin a recall campaign, even though the company knew the great risks the Shield posed to the health of women still using it. One of the intimidating tactics the company's lawyers used in defending against suits was to question women in pretrial depositions and in courtroom cross-examinations about their sexual relationships and practices. Many women, Mintz reports, were discouraged from suing once they learned what they might face.

More is involved here than what Brodeur calls "ethical bankruptcy." The women and the workers who were victims of these companies share a common attribute—a relative powerlessness. That the corporations were greedy is indisputable and hardly news; what needs to be stressed is their power to reap the rewards of their greed. Our culture encourages greediness, but most people do not have the power to consummate their greed by exploiting others. Power brings in its train contempt for those subject to it: a contempt evident in the medical director's report and barely hidden in the behavior of Robins's executives and lawyers. Contempt and power feed upon one another: The exercise of power may be tempered by some respect for the subordinate, but the absence of respect loosens the constraints on power. A failure effectively to resist the use of power erodes any residual respect and reinforces contempt. The combination of power and contempt paved the way for the asbestos and Dalkon Shield disasters.

If the victimization of workers and women is a result of their lack of power, then the issue is not simply "corporate greed" or "outrageous misconduct"—the central focus must be on the structure of society and its institutions. Here Brodeur and Mintz fail, and the source of the failure may lie in the forms of investigatory journalism or what was once called muckraking.

The muckrakers, who flourished in the heyday of Progressivism, did not write only about the misdeeds of businessmen and politicians; their subject was corruption in all spheres of American life. Nor were they simply critics; they were actively involved in the social reform movements of the day. But, like most other Americans, they supported and gloried in the achievements of an expanding American capitalism. If they were a subversive force, that was purely accidental. One of their lasting contributions was to establish the fact of business corruption in the cultural consciousness. After the muckrakers no one could see the great American corporations and their leaders as unsullied giants in the land. Still, if all innocence is gone, we have not lost the capacity to be titillated by what the historian Page Smith has called "the secret life of American capitalism."

It is hard not to be outraged by Brodeur's report, but at the end we are left with nothing but our indignation. It is only within the last ten pages that a reader gets some sense of a larger social and economic context. The health hazard of asbestos

> has called into question the conduct of a huge cross-section of the institutions that make up the private enterprise system, including many of its manufacturing corporations, insurance companies, investment houses, law firms, trade unions, and government regulatory agencies, as well as members of the medical and legal professions, the scientific community, and Congress.

But he says nothing about the connections

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between "the private enterprise system" and the questionable conduct of the institutions he lists, possibly because he believes there will be no efforts to "reform the private enterprise system." The closest he comes to linking his own indignation to a course of action is his endorsement of a sentiment expressed by a union official: "History shows that the lawsuit is the only adequate preventive measure against occupational and environmental cancer."

Mintz is more sophisticated than Brodeur. Unlike the latter, at the very outset he points to the relationship between misconduct and corporate structure. He cites the work of the early twentieth-century sociologist E. A. Ross, who "saw the absurdity of condemning what a man did in the bedroom and not in the boardroom" and later reprints a speech by a federal judge in one of the Shield cases who maintained, in Mintz's words, that "the man who assaults women from an office chair is as grave a sinner as the man who assaults women in an alley." At the end Mintz asks what can be learned from the horrors he has recounted. "The corporate structure itself—oriented as it is toward profit and away from liability—is a standing invitation" to immoral conduct while the "global scale of contemporary marketing" puts ever increasing numbers of people at risk. At the same time the usual constraints on behavior—"religion, conscience, criminal codes, economic competition, press exposure, social ostracism—have been overwhelmed." Mintz supports legislation that will "stop individuals who run corporations from inflicting harm. . . . This will not be done by weakening or eliminating existing deterrents and restraints, such as federal regulations; our hopes lie in strengthening them and adding new ones."

At Any Cost has the virtue of reminding us that corporate acts are the result of decisions made by specific and powerful people within the corporate hierarchy. Yet Mintz's essential argument has less to do with the question of corporate power than with another point: corporate structure makes it easy for executives to avoid confronting the contradictions between business morality and the decencies of everyday life. His proposed reforms would make the compartmentalization of life more difficult to achieve, and surely no one will quarrel with that objective.

If, however, the probabilities of getting the reforms are considered, the importance of the inequalities of power in the society becomes obvious. Mintz himself has few illusions. The reforms have no chance in Congress in "the forseeable future. . . . Not so long as Ronald Reagan is President. Not so long as the likes of George Bush may succeed him. Not so long as Congress allows special interests to control election financing." On the other hand, he also believes that as the public slowly becomes more aware of the need for regulations they will be enacted on the state level. But this testifies more to Mintz's optimism than to his political good sense. What, after all, do Reagan, Bush, and the influence of "the special interests" represent other than the power of corporate America? Is it purely fortuitous that one of the main consequences of the Manville case has been the effort to change the liability laws and to place caps on the amount of damages insurance companies and their clients must pay out?

If the muckraking tradition is to be a significant political and cultural force it must adopt a self-consciously critical stance to the structure of power in America today. A turn-of-the-century unthinking acceptance of capitalism does nothing at the end of the century but dull the impact of a journalism that performs the socially useful job of exposing the darker side of American institutions. But reports of capitalism's secret life that ignore the issue of power merely make Americans feel good by assuring us that we are still capable of experiencing so virtuous an emotion as moral indignation—even as we rededicate ourselves to the service of the bitch goddess Success. □

Note

[1] For a massive study of white-collar crime showing that the oil, auto, and pharmaceutical industries "violate government regulations more frequenty than others" see Marshall B. Clinard and Peter C. Yeager, *Corporate Crime* (New York: The Free Press, 1980). For a discussion of corrupt researchers, see John Braithwaite, *Corporate Crime in the Pharmaceutical Industry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George M. Fredrickson

The Renaissance of Southern History

Or the Life and Work of C. Vann Woodward

Before the 1950s, southern history was, for the most part, a provincial backwater of American historiography. Only in its role as protagonist in the sectional controversy and the Civil War did the South receive much attention from mainstream interpreters of the American past. All that has changed. With the possible exception of the colonial and revolutionary periods, the South in the nineteenth century has become the liveliest and most creative field within American historical studies. This concentration of attention and talent on the South—Old and New—is due in large measure to the achievement and influence of C. Vann Woodward. In a series of books extending over almost half a century, Woodward has reinterpreted southern history, especially since Reconstruction, in ways that have inspired younger scholars (many of them Woodward's students) and pointed them toward fruitful new questions and subjects for investigation. In the process, Woodward has come to be regarded by many as the most distinguished living historian of the United States.

*Thinking Back** presents Woodward's reflections on his career as a historian. It is not autobiography in any usual or conventional sense because it pays relatively little attention to the author's personal life or to the academic or other institutional settings within which he has functioned professionally. It centers on his writings—the intellectual concerns and influences which inspired them and how they have been received and weathered the test of time. Few eminent historians could carry out such an enterprise with such grace and panache. Woodward is justifiably proud of what he has accomplished, but he is totally immune from the arrogant, defensive, and condescending attitudes that sometimes mar intergenerational historiographic discourse. He has listened to his younger critics, even when their manners have not been as good as his own, and has readily amended his own interpretations when he thought they had a good case. But he has not surrendered the central insights that have informed his work and is obviously pleased that younger generations of southern historians have tended more often to build on his interpretations than to play the "revisionist" game of turning them on their head.

WOODWARD WAS BORN IN 1908 AND RAISED in Arkansas, the son of a public school administrator who later became the president of a small Georgia college. His family had owned slaves before the Civil War, and his childhood memories are of an era "when white racial orthodoxy and oppression were at their very peak and the revived Ku Klux Klan was most active." After beginning his higher education at tiny Henderson College in Arkansas, he transferred to Emory in Atlanta where he sat next to David Potter, another future luminary in the field of southern history, in his only undergraduate history course. Woodward then taught English at Georgia Tech and earned an M.A. in political science at Columbia. His decision to work for a Ph.D. in history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill came, interestingly enough, only after he had started to work on a biography of Tom Watson, the Georgia Populist leader, and come to the realization that a graduate fellowship enabling him to persist in this endeavor would be most convenient. His initial, preprofessional interest

**Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History* by C. Vann Woodward (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1986). 158pp. $12.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in Watson appears to have been closely related to his youthful radicalism and dissent from the southern status quo. In Atlanta, he was briefly the chairman of a committee to defend Angelo Herndon, a black communist who was on trial for his life for "inciting to insurrection." Woodward did not become a communist, a fellow traveler, or even a theoretical Marxist during the 1930s, but he did develop a lifelong sympathy with popular struggles against class and race domination.

WOODWARD FOUND CHAPEL HILL in the thirties stimulating, despite his dismay at the pedestrian and filiopietistic character of the work that he had to read in his own field of southern history. Writers, literary critics, and sociologists were then engaged in the spirited debate about the nature of the South and its traditions that the Nashville Agrarians had initiated, and Woodward concluded that historians could make a major contribution to this discourse if they could escape from conventionality and antiquarianism. Woodward's early position, as it emerged in *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel,* might be defined as a kind of left agrarianism. Unlike the Nashville School, which combined a veneration of agrarian traditions with social and political conservatism, or the Chapel Hill "liberals," who cautiously sanctioned the growth of an urban-industrial society, Woodward showed that the kind of agrarianism that animated Tom Watson and the southern Populists of the 1890s combined loyalty to the region and its traditions with a socially radical agenda that included not only popular control of the corporations but also an end to the South's fixation with white supremacy and the color line. But he was too much of a realist to maintain that the Populists had left a tangible legacy on which the New Dealers and radical reformers of the 1930s could build directly. Not only had they been utterly defeated, but Tom Watson, their most eloquent and impressive spokesman, had turned to race-baiting and other assorted bigotries later in his career and had carried much of his following with him. Woodward's account of Watson's career portrays a tragedy with elements of farce, not the kind of morality play that he might have produced if he had allowed his reformist commitments to overshadow his sense of the complexity and integrity of human experience.

After a wartime interlude that included the chance to practice his craft as a historian of naval operations in the Pacific, Woodward returned to southern history and eventually to distinguished professorships at Johns Hopkins and Yale. In 1950 and '51, he published the two major works that firmly established his reputation as one of the foremost American historians of his generation—*Reunion and Reaction*, an entirely original account and analysis of the intersectional deal that ended Reconstruction in 1877, and *Origins of the New South*, a magisterial survey and reinterpretation of southern history from 1877 to 1913. In my opinion, and I think many other historians would agree, *Origins* is the finest single piece of scholarship and writing in the field of American history that has appeared in the past half-century or more. At a time when a great chasm has developed between narrative historians who write with stylistic felicity for a general audience and analytical historians who argue brilliantly in academic or social-scientific prose for the benefit of their peers in other history departments, Woodward's achievement in *Origins* is likely to seem almost miraculous. Relying mainly on primary sources, he covered an extended period in southern history with literary flair and narrative power, while providing a coherent general interpretation that was not only decisively new and "revisionist" but also sufficiently persuasive to stand virtually unchallenged for more than two decades.

Because *Origins* was a lengthy work on a period and a subject that had little attraction for the nonacademic readers of historical books, it achieved no great sales or general public notice; it even failed to win the Pulitzer Prize it so richly deserved. But in 1955 Woodward published a shorter and less definitive work that would bring him broad recognition and public attention. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* began as a series of lectures at the University of Virginia. Appearing shortly after the Supreme Court had declared racial segregation in the schools to be unconstitutional, it offered a badly needed and cautiously optimis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tic perspective on the history of legalized racial discrimination in the South. Arguing that the imposition of legalized segregation had been a political act, reflecting the special circumstances that existed in the South around the turn of the century, it suggested to many people that segregation could now be readily dismantled by concerted political and legal action—that it was not an immutable "folkway," a permanent and necessary aspect of the southern way of life. Often oversimplified or even misinterpreted, the Woodward thesis had its own career as part of the ideological arsenal of the anti-segregation movement of the 1960s. On one occasion, Martin Luther King, Jr. even described it as "the historical bible of the civil rights movement." When white backlash and black power cast a pall on integrationist optimism in the late 1960s, revisionists argued that Woodward had underestimated the historical and psychological depths of southern racism, a critique which obliged him to modify or clarify his argument in a series of revised editions of *The Strange Career.* But the book continues to be taken seriously; indeed it has yet to be displaced as the standard general interpretation of the origins of legalized segregation.

Since the 1950s, Woodward has published several additional books—two notable collections of essays and six edited works, including the version of Mary Chesnut's diaries that won him a long-overdue Pulitzer Prize in 1982. Now retired from teaching but still extremely active as scholar, reviewer, editor, lecturer, and recipient of every professional honor that anyone can think to bestow upon him, he invites us in *Thinking Back* to attempt a general assessment of his contribution to southern and American history. Since Woodward's greatness can be taken for granted, such an assessment is more a matter of understanding and explaining the nature of his genius or distinctiveness than of trying to measure his achievement. Since Woodward himself is a believer that the most important historical questions are never fully resolved and that courteous controversy among historians is healthy, it may also be proper to raise some questions about his overall interpretation of southern history.

A distinctive feature of Woodward's achievement that has helped to give his work its exceptional durability is its individuality and relative immunity from shifts in historiographic fashion. In an era when many historians have been identified with particular schools of interpretation or historiographic "paradigms," Woodward has defied precise classification. He has neither founded a school nor given unqualified allegiance to one. In his early years he was, as he acknowledges, influenced by Charles A. Beard and the "Progressive School" of American historiography—and that influence persisted in his tendency to look for an economic basis for politics and ideology and to regard social conflict as a normal rather than an exceptional feature of the American past.

Yet he clearly diverged from the Progressive tradition in his penchant for uncovering historical ironies, paradoxes, and discontinuities. *Reunion and Reaction*, with its exposure of the specific economic interests that influenced the informal sectional compromise of 1877, is his most Beardian book. (Woodward is now willing to make substantial concessions to critics of its economic-determinist, "muckraking" emphasis.) But *Origins of the New South*, the broader study from which *Reunion and Reaction* spun off, transcends Progressive historiography, not only in its emphasis on conflict *within* the South as well as simply between the sections, but also in its sophisticated understanding of the role of ideologies and myths. The vision of a "New South" was partly propaganda for the economic and political ambitions of a rising middle class, but it was also shaped by cultural expectations that are not reducible to conscious material interests.

Furthermore, racism is treated as an autonomous force; it could be aroused and manipulated by groups with more immediate and selfish concerns than white supremacy as an end in itself but it also presented an almost insuperable stumbling block for radicals who aimed to divide the South politically along class lines. Backtracking somewhat from the emphasis on Populist rhetoric defending equal rights for blacks in *Tom Watson*, Woodward now wrote that:

> A dilemma with roots as deeply struck in the history of a people as were those of the South's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ancient [racial] problem could not be expected to yield to political formulas, and certainly not the Populist formula of "self-interest." "This is a white man's country and will always be controlled by whites," wrote a Virginia Populist, introducing an essay on the rights of the Negro.

Although he transcended Progressivism, Woodward remained aloof from the dominant "consensus" school of historiography in the 1950s. Part of his resistance to the fashion of downplaying conflict and class division in American history stemmed from the inherent characteristics of his subject matter. It was difficult from the vantage point of southern history to deny the importance of division and conflict—sectional, racial, and economic. But he also responded, almost viscerally, to the tendency of consensus historians to make nineteenth-century rebels, particularly southern ones, into liberals-under-the skin or irrational deviants. Besides defending the Populists against charges that they were animated mainly by anti-Semitism, nativism, and outworn pastoral mythologies, he also took seriously the antiliberal or anticapitalist pretensions of the champions of slavery and the Old South. Whatever might be true of the rest of the country, the South had never had a liberal consensus but had been a battleground for conservative, liberal, and radical persuasions.

A less widely noticed example of Woodward's resistance to historiographic fashions was his somewhat skeptical response to the neo-abolitionist view of the Civil War and Reconstruction that came to prominence in the 1960s. Writing from the perspective of a southerner who overcame the racism of his own heritage, he was suspicious of nineteenth-century northerners—abolitionists and Radical Republicans—who proclaimed their devotion to black liberation and equality in the South. In several essays, he dissented from what he called "the antislavery myth" of northern virtue and southern villainy during the sectional struggle and the Reconstruction era that was then being advanced by some northern liberal historians. It was not difficult for him to show that the North was just as racist as the South, if not more so, during the middle decades of the nineteenth century and to find ulterior motives for Radical Reconstruction. When the Second Reconstruction of the 1960s failed to achieve its objective of full racial equality and the limitations of optimistic Yankee liberalism again became apparent, Woodward expressed his skepticism about the North's "commitment to equality" in the nineteenth century more vigorously (he actually retracted an earlier assertion that such a commitment had in fact been made, albeit made hesitantly and half-heartedly), and he helped to inspire the general shift away from neo-abolitionist assumptions which became fully apparent in the 1970s.

During the late 1960s and 1970s, Woodward showed greater respect than most liberal historians for the emerging neo-Marxist view of the Old South as a precapitalist society with an antibourgeois world view. Cautiously endorsing the arguments of Eugene Genovese, he wrote in 1971 that "the slave society of the South *was* a paternalistic order, perhaps the most paternalistic of the slave societies in the New World." Sounding even more like Genovese, he denounced Wilbur J. Cash's attempt to conflate the ethos of the Old South with that of the New because it failed to appreciate the fact that "A great slave society, by far the largest and richest of those that had existed in the New World since the sixteenth century, had grown up and miraculously flourished in the heart of a thoroughly bourgeois and partly puritanical republic." Yet Woodward at no time has embraced a consistently Marxist or "class" interpretation of southern history. As a profound student of southern racism, he has tended to resist neo-Marxist interpretations whenever they have played down consciousness of race to the point of denying it a substantial independent significance in southern history.

Whatever one may think of the particular positions that Woodward has taken in relation to the historiographic trends and controversies of the past half-century, there is no denying that his viewpoints have been characterized by a lack of dogmatism, a refusal to allow his historical imagination to be fettered by an unchanging set of interpretive assumptions, and an openness to correction or revision. This flexible and experimental attitude has preserved him from binding allegiances to tran-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sient forms and fashions in historiography and has helped to give his work greater staying power than it would have had if it had been easier to locate precisely within a school or movement.

Woodward's special distinction among American historians cannot be adequately appreciated, however, merely by describing his creative and fluid involvement with the changing historiography of his time and field. As he makes clear in *Thinking Back*, Woodward has always identified as much, if not more, with the literary figures of the Southern Renaissance than with professional historians of the South. In an age when history has ceased to be a branch of literature or even to have many affinities with it, Woodward may be unique in his ability to exist simultaneously in the world of letters and historical scholarship. He does not, of course, write fiction or poetry. But many of the essays in *The Burden of Southern History* and *American Counterpoint* have a rhetorical quality that seems to derive more from the great tradition of essay writing in Anglo-American letters than from the no-nonsense expository mode of the typical article in historical journals. His work in general, as has been much noted and appreciated, makes extensive use of wit, irony, metaphor, and other literary devices that most modern historians shun. He also has a commitment to narrative as an essential aspect of historical writing. Modern historians, especially those who have fallen under the influence of the social sciences, tend to be suspicious of narrative, preferring an analytical mode of discourse akin to reports of new findings in the natural sciences. But Woodward continues to be an unreconstructed "humanist" and would be loath to concede that there is a difference between the historical "truth" of something and a narrative account of it. At the beginning of *Thinking Back* he quotes Robert Penn Warren's line "History is not Truth. Truth is in the telling." Toward the end of the book, he indicates that the kind of historical consciousness that he found exemplified in the writers of the Southern Renaissance "did not encourage sociological generalization about types, classes, or races—planters, yeomen, poor whites, or slaves—but rather supported the historian's concern for the particular, the concrete, the individual."

Origins of the New South is such a stunning achievement because it so successfully fuses narrative and interpretation. General arguments are made, and so effectively that older views of the period were simply blown away; but they are not presented as abstract propositions divorced from the flow of events and the attitudes and actions of individual human beings. Conclusions about the rise or fall of classes and the success or failure of movements emerge organically out of a rich and nuanced account of how the flesh-and-blood people of the time perceived their problems and reacted to them. Interpretive narration of this kind requires a finely adjusted balance between empathetic understanding and judgmental perspective. The historian must contrive somehow to be in the stream and on its bank at the same time. Woodward is extraordinarily skilled at making commentary and analysis seem integral to narration and description. His judgments are rarely made didactically but are conveyed mainly through irony, especially the deliberate understatement of conclusions that seem inescapable in light of the facts and examples already presented. One instance is the conclusion Woodward draws from the data showing the enormous profits made by early cotton mill promoters who presented themselves as motivated primarily by the philanthropic aim of providing employment for an impoverished class of poor whites: "The profit motive does not necessarily preclude the philanthropic motive, but it does seem to have outweighed it in some instances." Woodward is no detached observer of the New South; he is a passionate critic of its dominant groups and tendencies. His critique is all the more effective because it generally comes in the form of ironic narrative rather than being expounded directly in argumentative or polemical prose.

Woodward derives the authority for his severe judgments on the dominant classes of the New South less from modern ideologies than from moral values that he believes were part of the cultural traditions of the South itself. This brings us to the subject of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Woodward's committed southernism—his insider's relationship to the historical experience he examines. To justify his sense of involvement and concern, Woodward quotes the historian H. Stuart Hughes: "Unless there is some emotional tie, some elective affinity, the results will be pedantic or perfunctory." Outsiders, especially northern liberals, may have different emotional links to the subject and are likely to approach the history of the white South with a touch of the disdain and self-righteousness that Woodward finds in some of the abolitionists and Radical Republicans of the nineteenth century. They also may be tempted to conclude that Woodward is whistling in the dark when he finds a distinctive southern basis for judging and reforming, not only the South itself, but also the nation as a whole. His argument in *The Burden of Southern History* and subsequent writings that southernism with its legacy of defeat and discontinuity should promote a realistic and critical attitude toward the nation's current international hubris or "arrogance of power" is hard to reconcile with the South's characteristic tendency to hypernationalism or superpatriotism (as Woodward himself concedes). In his writings on the history of race relations, he has sometimes seemed to be searching a bit too zealously for a southern tradition of racial egalitarianism, or at least tolerance, to set against the admittedly overpowering tradition of white supremacy. Hence it has been easy for Yankee liberals and radicals to conclude that Woodward's regional affinities have made him, if not a southern apologist, at least the captive of a version of the "southern mystique" that allows him to fudge the obvious conclusions about unmitigated southern depravity.

Where, more precisely, does Woodward find southern ideals and idioms that can be used to condemn the crimes and injustices that have been perpetrated in the name of the South? What, in other words, are the indigenous sources of his moral judgments? Most obviously, there is the example of twentieth-century southern literature, which reveals how one can hate the cruelty and injustice of the region while still identifying with it and appreciating the nobility that southerners, white and black alike, have sometimes manifested. Woodward's perspective, in short, is the product of a Faulknerian love-hate relationship with the region and a sense of its history as reflecting both the best and the worst in human nature. He also hints at an emotional affinity with certain aspects of the civilization of the Old South, an attraction or at least a fascination that he shares with such writers as Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, Ellen Glasgow, and Allen Tate.

Woodward has not written extensively or in detail on the Old South, but a sense that it differed radically from both the North and the New South has been an underlying assumption in his work. He quite often implies that antebellum southern civilization was different in kind from the bourgeois society of the North and the New South and thus a viable source of alternative values for those alienated from a modern capitalist culture. In his eloquent essay on Wilbur J. Cash and his *The Mind of the South*, Woodward rises to rare heights of righteous indignation because of Cash's insensitivity to the profound differences between the Confederate cause and the Rotary-Club boosterism of the New South. In his essay on "The Southern Ethic in a Puritan World," he defends the Old South against charges of laziness and lack of community, suggesting instead that its positive evaluation of leisure was a healthy alternative to the compulsive "Protestant ethic" of the North. This is not to say that Woodward glorifies the Old South or denies its capacity for monumental injustice and flagrant irrationality. But he subtly suggests that the virtues of the traditional premodern South were on as grand a scale as its vices, and that these virtues deserve to be kept in mind in times when everything—good as well as evil—seems to be reduced in size or grandeur.

Given his animus against the business civilization of the New South and his desire to find dimensions of the southern experience that contradict presumptions of an emerging bourgeoisie to speak for an authentic Southernism, it is understandable that Woodward rejects views of southern history that stress continuity rather than change. A major theme of *Thinking Back* is that the Civil War and Reconstruc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion constituted a radical break in the life of the region. Against historians of various ideological and methodological persuasions who have asserted that there are basic continuities between the antebellum and postbellum South, he reaffirms his belief that a new ruling class and a new ethos emerged out of the wreckage of the Confederacy. The change vs. continuity argument is, as Woodward points out, a matter of relative rather than absolute disagreement. No one denies that some things changed greatly and other things remained similar. The issue seems to come down to whether or not the defeat of the Confederacy fundamentally transformed the South's economic and social system and the ideology or "world view" that it engendered. The "new continuitarians," as Woodward calls them, actually argue from two opposing perspectives. Some neo-Marxists claim that a precapitalist, antibourgeois ruling class maintained its hegemony well into the post-war era, while some liberal historians with lingering affinities with the consensus school of American historiography have reasserted the view that the Old South was dominated by a capitalist, "liberal" mentality. For the "new continuitarians," the abolition of slavery meant *either* that the capitalists of the South simply diverted their entrepreneurial energies from plantation agriculture to commerce and industry and shifted from one type of market-oriented labor system to another *or* that its precapitalists merely replaced one form of paternalistic labor coercion with another.

This is not the place to examine this debate in depth. But perhaps it is a suitable occasion to observe that Woodward seems to have involved himself, somewhat uncharacteristically, in a conflict of grand abstractions based on the assumption that there must be either categorical differences or virtual identities between societies that inhabit the same nation state or succeed each other in the same region. Woodward's instinct, and it is a thoroughly justifiable one, is that such a cataclysmic experience as the Civil War and the emancipation of the slaves must have made a great difference. But does it trivialize the drama and the sacrifice to find it signifying something less than a clear-cut shift from a traditional, precapitalist society to a modern liberal-capitalist one? I'm personally attracted to the view of Woodward's compatriot and friend David Potter that the South has always been Janus-faced or ambivalent about the merits of "tradition" and "progress." The task of the historian might be to analyze this conflict and assess the balance of forces in a given period. Clearly the abolition of slavery demolished an institution that sustained conservatism and hierarchy in a unique fashion, but the Old South was hardly devoid of entrepreneurial, individualistic, and democratic impulses (so long as one acknowledges the racial qualification in its version of "democracy"). The leaders of the New South, as Woodward indicates so effectively in *Origins*, found new ways to sustain privilege and inequality and give their system the aura of traditionalism, but not without major dissension from Populists and other protesters. If the shift from precapitalism to capitalism means simply that the forces resisting capitalist modernization in all of its aspects came out of the Civil War relatively weaker than before, then the case is a strong one. If it is asserted, however, that the Old South was categorically or systematically different in its fundamental values from the North and the New South then the argument becomes problematic.

It is also possible that the Civil War, contrary to what Woodward tends to imply, caused almost as great a discontinuity in northern life as in southern. Winning as well as losing had its costs and complex legacies. But reconsidering Woodward's view of southern and intersectional history would be a less useful endeavor for historians than attempting to view the history of the country as a whole from a Woodwardian perspective. If the South turns out to be less exceptional than he has argued, it may well be because the northern experience exhibits comparable conflicts, ironies, and paradoxes. The history of the South holds such fascination these days at least partly because Woodward has written so well about it. When the rest of the country finds historians of similar talent and skill, the general American past will take on greater meaning and cultural significance; then perhaps we can begin to assume "the burden of American history." □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jan T. Gross

Polish-Jewish Relations During the War: an Interpretation

For the last two hundred years, with the exception of a brief interval between the two World Wars, Poland has been either partitioned, occupied, or governed by proxy. Squeezed between Russia and Germany, Poles took nourishment and continuity as a historical nation from remembrance of things past whenever their sovereignty as a political nation was curtailed or abolished. Lately these efforts were inspired by a conviction that even if present-day institutions could not be changed, a halfway victory over totalitarianism's attempts to destroy social solidarity could still be won if the community's history were rescued from the regime's ambition to determine not only the country's future but also its past. Thus, the wonderful intuition that totalitarianism must destroy the entire context of social reality independent of its own dictate, and acquire a copyright not only on what is but also on what had been, came to the Poles not because they read Orwell's *1984*, but because for well over one hundred years they nurtured the idea of the Polish nation against all the odds of nineteenth-century geopolitics. Once before, when they lost their national sovereignty, the Poles locked in on their past spiritually and it worked: Poland was resurrected.

Since World War II, despite the dogged persistence of the Poles to reclaim this past, to go beyond, revise, and correct the government-approved version of their history that has been manifested during every mass upheaval in the Polish People's Republic, there was never a temptation to reopen the subject of wartime Polish-Jewish relations. Indeed, a total curiosity among important topics in twentieth-century Polish history, this one alone has not stimulated in the émigré literature or among the uncensored publications a single piece of writing that could not have appeared in a government-owned publishing house in Poland. What could be the meaning of such a consensus but that the matter is settled and that the record on this issue has been set straight? To find out what the Poles think happened between them and the Jews and the Germans, let us take under scrutiny the most enlightened and open-minded version of these historical events available to the Polish audience.

A noted historian of literature, essayist, and founding member of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) in Warsaw, Jan Jozef Lipski, has written and spoken on the subject of Polish-Jewish relations on many occasions. Indeed, one of his essays, entitled "Two Motherlands, Two Patriotisms—Remarks about Xenophobia and Self-Centeredness of the Poles," has been celebrated in the independent journals (that is, by genuine public opinion) as a masterpiece that boldly confronted various deceptively simplistic and one-sided patriotic stereotypes. In the latest and most concise of his statements on this issue, delivered in April 1983 as a speech at the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising anniversary, after having established that the Polish underground offered no more than token or symbolic military assistance to the fighting Jews, Lipski goes on as follows:

> The conscience of the Polish nation would be sick and mortally wounded if we did not ask ourselves another question: Even if not with weapons in hand did we at least do as much as was possible to help and save the Jews? Paying homage to the Ghetto fighters, as well as to its defenseless inhabitants who had been killed, we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also have the right and duty to pay homage to those Poles who lost their lives while helping the Jews. There are many in the Polish nation who had died a heroic death for their contribution to this most dangerous—and most deserving of admiration for those who dared to get involved—aspect of the Polish war. Extraordinary courage was required at the time in Poland to join in this struggle. Can every one of millions of ordinary people be expected to behave as a hero? And yet, there are times, and causes, which demand heroism. We, who remember, let us ask ourselves if there was not too much indifference—even though mixed up with fear, but indifference nonetheless? Did we all do as much as was possible, or less, or nothing at all in those times when dying people and our own moral norms called for doing more than was possible?

Yet Poles are often wronged when, in the world, too far-reaching generalizations are drawn concerning the collaboration of some Poles in the tracking down of the Jews, or blackmailing them. Criminal and amoral social margins exist in every community, and among their victims at the time in Poland were not only Jews but also General Grot-Rowecki and thousands of other soldiers of the anti-Nazi underground. We should reject irresponsible generalizations in this matter, just as we should reject generalizations that wrong other nations. Anti-Polonism is not morally any better than anti-Semitism or anti-Ukrainianism.[1]

What strikes me in Lipski's statement—composed of one question and two almost equal-in-length paragraphs—is his search for balance, for equivalences. In the first paragraph he examines, roughly speaking, attitudes. He tells us that while there may have been too much indifference among the Poles vis-à-vis the plight of the Jews, the Poles also demonstrated extraordinary heroism in assisting the Jews. In the second paragraph he examines, roughly speaking, behavior. Some Poles—a criminal margin—undoubtedly victimized Jews, but these Poles also victimized other Poles. Furthermore, Lipski points to the extraordinary quality of the Polish victims of denunciations. Thus, a further impression of equivalence is conveyed as, on the one hand, we have the overwhelming number of Jewish dead but on the other a smaller no doubt, yet exclusive, self-selected group of freedom fighters—a general and thousands of soldiers. Then, in the final point, we are taken beyond the wartime period to find out that the Jews have actually victimized the Poles as well. For those "irresponsible generalizations" that one may come upon "in the world" are spread by Jews—Lipski says so explicitly in his speech at the Warsaw University in 1981 for example—and, as we learn from the *coda* of this paragraph "anti-Polonism isn't morally any better than anti-Semitism."

As to the question opening the quote—the important question, I think, that we must answer in order to confront the subject matter of Polish-Jewish relations during the war—it is left in midair. Lipski identifies the issue—did Poles offer as much assistance and help to the Jews as was possible?—but he does not answer his own question. Neither does he volunteer to prescribe a norm. There are times, he argues, which mandate heroism and yet, he says, we cannot expect ordinary people to behave heroically; nor does he provide us with an unambiguous description of what actually happened: Poles were too passive and extraordinarily heroic at the same time.

In spite of the limitations of Lipski's argumentation, I find it appealing that in his statements he does not close off the issue. There is a certain hesitation, and thus an opening of sorts, in his texts as when he says, for example, that "the evaluation of how Poles behaved vis-à-vis the Jews during World War II cannot be, unfortunately, simple and unambiguous." And he can be quite daring when he states, for example, that "a significant part of [Polish] society was neutral, oblivious, to the extermination of the Jews." "Have we never heard during the occupation," he asks, "the sentence 'after the war monuments will be built for Hitler' "—presumably to celebrate Hitler's "solution" of the Jewish problem. But, admirable as they are in their sincerity, these observations do not serve as starting points of inquiry: what did it mean to be "oblivious" to the spectacle of the Holocaust in wartime Poland? How large was the "significant part" quoted in his assessment? How did anti-Semitism manifest itself during the occupation? Lipski perpetuates the irrelevant framework of the discussion where the socially marginal phenomenon of *szmalcownictwo* (active collabo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ration with the Germans in ferreting out the Jews) is contrasted with the socially marginal phenomenon of heroism (active assistance to the hiding Jews), while the investigation concerning attitudes and behavior of the missing in-between is left undone.

The standard commentary on Polish attitudes towards the Jews includes one very powerful argument that I have mentioned only in passing and that deserves closer scrutiny. It establishes, with compelling force, that Poles did on Jews' behalf as much as could have been expected of them. Lipski points out:

> I know people who were caught by the Germans while wielding weapons and who survived concentration camps. But I don't know anybody who survived after being caught while hiding a Jew. There is more to it: a soldier in the Home Army knew that in case of arrest he would be tortured, his wife might be arrested, that he would probably be executed; but he could hope that his children would survive. Those who were hiding Jews could not even hope for this.

The punishment for helping Jews during the German occupation in Poland was death. Entire families would be executed if Jews were found hiding in their house or apartment. Such is the truth about those times. Is it, therefore, surprising that Poles generally obeyed the German injunction? The answer to this question would be a relatively easy no but for the fact that there were other kinds of activities prohibited by the Nazis under penalty of death that the Poles massively engaged in. The point I am making is that if we adopt a certain framework for the explanation of people's behavior it must be consistently applicable across the range of comparable choices which they make in a given situation. Thus, I do not deny that helping the Jews was most difficult and frightening because it was so irrevocably sanctioned with death, and because one's family was inevitably endangered as well. But, despite the uneasy feeling that it is rather facile to make such statements in writing, I would argue that in the terms in which the comparison is being made, the cost difference between joining an anti-Nazi conspiracy and helping the Jews was marginal. Lipski spells it out: for a conspirator there is death following tortures, arrest of a wife or a husband and, as he or she will be interrogated as well, most likely there is a torture session in store for the spouse too, maybe even death or concentration camp. The child or children will survive, though orphaned and traumatized. For helping a Jew the whole family dies, without being tortured though.

Once again, remembering that we are merely investigating the merits of an argument, not real motivations of people who actually had to make these horrifying decisions, let us compare what was at stake for conspirators vis-à-vis good samaritans: Undeniably there is a difference between the projected costs of the two courses of action, but it is rather subtle; for childless couples it further diminishes; and for single men and women, especially those who do not live with their parents any more, there is none. Is it indeed the case that these Poles, unburdened as yet by family obligations and already independent, presumably mostly young, engaged in anti-Nazi conspiracies with a zeal commensurate to their efforts on behalf of the Jews? And then, let us not forget that collective responsibility was widely used by the Germans in their efforts to stamp out conspiratorial activity as well. Thousands of hostages were shot in public executions throughout occupied Poland. I am quite certain that more people were killed by the Germans in connection with underground activity than for helping the Jews. Why is it then that so many Poles pursued conspiratorial activity and so few were involved in actively helping out Jews? The weakness of this type of explanation lies in the discrepancy between marginal cost differences and the vast difference in outcomes.

But the argument that the Jews could not have been helped more because of the nature of German reprisals has its own dynamic, which leads to yet another conceptualization of the Polish-Jewish relation during the occupation beyond the value-free, as it were, cost-benefit framework. Let me quote again briefly from a very respectable author writing in a most respectable journal. In the November 1979 issue of *Kultura*, published in Paris, we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

find two articles, by Rafael Scharf and Andrzej Szczypiorski, printed jointly under the rubric: "Poles and Jews—summing up the discussion." Investigating the grounds on which one could expect Poles to run the risks entailed in helping out the Jews, Szczypiorski restates the issue as follows: "On what moral grounds could a fugitive from the ghetto endanger the existence of not one Pole but of the entire Polish family in the effort to save his own, i.e., one life?" Szczypiorski promptly moves to reassure us: "This is all a patent absurdity. Even more, it is like standing upside down the entire moral problematics of European culture." [2] But his is merely a follow-up question to an earlier registered doubt—namely, can ordinary people be blamed for not behaving as heroes? What right do we have to expect from them such conduct?

This is a conceptualization that moves us one step beyond the prior argument. For, as long as we remain within its logic, a proper answer to a Jew knocking on our door during the war would be: "Go away. I am afraid. I do not want to run the risk of being killed together with my family for helping you." By saying so we do not question the Jews' right to self-defense, we may even sympathize with their efforts to save themselves, and we still assign where it belongs the blame for a potential threat to our own life that such efforts carry—namely, we assign it to those who are after this Jew and want to kill him. When, on the other hand, one questions the Jew's right to knock on one's door and gets angry at *him*, one blames *the Jew* for a threat to one's life created by his trying to stay alive.

Such anger, of course, is grounded in a factual mistake. An important link is missing from an imputed causal chain on which our life allegedly depends: namely the German executioner. But the simplicity and familiarity of this conceptualization is psychologically plausible: the Jew is the problem. Hasn't he always been a problem? Now he is a bigger problem (threat) than before, but all problems are bigger now. Indeed Szczypiorski makes the suggestion that many people must have been angry with Jews for seeking their help.

This is, then, the path leading from Szczypiorski's analysis that he does not explore. But have the Poles ever plainly said to the world that they did not help the Jews enough during the war because they were afraid? Szczypiorski would like us to believe that fear and guilt were precisely what the Poles experienced: "And when the Jew went away . . . this Pole, restless in his house, would converse through the night with his own conscience, his nation, the entire humanity and God Almighty in a dialogue so horrible and complicated that only Dostoyevski could express it." I am afraid this is wishful thinking. For even without producing a Dostoyevski, if what Szczypiorski describes had been the case there would be an avalanche of literature, second-hand literature, after the war, on this topic. There is not. Poles, by and large, have not agonized over their refusal to help the Jews as much as they could. In any case there is no evidence that they have agonized.

Thus, the second difficulty with the cost-benefit analysis, even if we accepted it at face value, is that one never finds this proposition—Poles did not do more because they were afraid—advanced up front. Instead, it always comes out extracted, as a reply (which means, in the first place, that Poles do not want to talk about the matter and must be forced to do so), and it is inadvertently couched in either aggressive or hysterical rhetoric. There is either Szczypiorski's question lurking behind—What right did the Jews have to expect from us more, or even to expect what *had* been done?—or personal indignation as in Lipski's March-1968-anniversary speech—"Why do I have to be slapped on the face?" (by Jews reproaching Poland as a nation for its wartime behavior)—particularly since his family, as he explains, was hiding Jews. Coming late and in the tone of injury, the argument appears as a rationalization. Otherwise, why didn't the Poles state at the conclusion of the war, and repeat endlessly since then: We are sorry, but we were afraid?

I deliberately chose to confront Jan Jozef Lipski's presentation because nobody can be more immune to the charge of anti-Semitism or even nationalism than he. Thus, his statement cannot be dismissed on the grounds of prejudice. But wartime Polish-Jewish relations

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is such a frightening subject that any departure from what the audience is used to hearing would shatter its bond with the speaker. And so while Lipski educates the public somewhat—I noted briefly his tentative opening up of the subject—he remains imprisoned by public expectations as to what he can say.

To my mind the stereotypical diagnosis of Polish-Jewish relations during the war is misleading both in terms of the general image it conveys and in terms of particulars that it advocates. Here is the general picture that I read into this position: In the midst of an enormity—namely, of a whole nation going to its death and of another group of human beings systematically, deliberately, and over a long period of time administering the death—in the midst of this scandal of inhuman proportions there exists yet another group of people that keeps its sanity and, on the whole, maintains a balanced judgment. It fears sanctions that ought to be feared, has its share of heroes and its share of scum. Common sense is invoked to explicate behavior of the Polish society when confronted with the extermination of the Jews. The uniqueness of the situation is removed and a straightforward cost-benefit analysis is introduced, plus an observation about normal distribution of moral character in a population. There are innocuous causes explaining Poles' behavior vis-à-vis the Jews during World War II—behavior that was also, on the whole, innocuous and normal.

WHY IS IT THEN THAT, on the whole, the Jews are scandalized by it and Poles do not want to speak about it? "Next to the atrocious facts" [of the Holocaust], says Czeslaw Milosz in his Norton lectures, "the very idea of literature seems indecent." How does the idea of cost-benefit calculation fare in comparison, or the explanation that there is scum in every society, or the indignation at having our own good name slandered by "irresponsible generalizations"? None of these purported explanations can help us understand, or even describe, what has happened; none gives us a sense of why the surviving Jews are so profoundly and irrevocably injured by the Poles' behavior; none brings us a better grasp of why the Poles are so aggressive, or rather defensive, about the subject of wartime Polish-Jewish relations. Thus, I do not believe in the direction of the causal relationship that has been suggested by the cost-benefit explanation. Rather, I think it is altogether opposite. *Because* the Poles were not ready to assist the Jews and, by and large, refrained from doing so, the punishment of death for harboring Jews was meted out by the Germans systematically and without reprieve. I shall now explain the factual premises as well as the reasoning that underlies this proposition.

Let us state bluntly that during World War II, during the German occupation of Poland, more or less every segment of Polish society lacked sympathy for the Jews. Solid evidence in support of this claim can be retrieved from the underground publications. Over 2,000 such periodicals appeared during the occupation, and their editors enjoyed unlimited freedom to print what their wisdom, party line, or personal taste dictated. All political parties and factions, all social groups had their publications, and one could gauge from them the state of public opinion on a particular subject. It turns out that, with the exception of the Communist press and central publications of the Home Army, the underground periodicals were not sympathetic to the Jews. They did not condone Nazi atrocities—though some appreciated the usefulness of the end result—but they all spoke of the existence of "a Jewish problem" in Poland and the need to find for it some solution after the war—such as emigration, for example. Indeed, much of the writing about the Jews referred to incidentals, barely if at all related to either German policies during the war or the so-called "Jewish problem" in Poland. And perhaps, precisely because of the gratuitousness of comments about the Jews in these contexts, the prejudice comes out in even sharper relief.[3]

And there is corroborating evidence about prevailing anti-Semitism among the Poles beyond what was written in the underground press. A number of Poles whose specific task during the war involved providing or transmitting to the Polish government-in-exile evaluations of attitudes and prospects of Polish society had their opinion registered and we may

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consult it today. I have in mind people whose responsibility it was to be informed and to state objective truth. Here follow excerpts from a few reports by emissaries as well as by heads of the civilian and military underground in Poland. Jan Karski, who gave such a forceful interview in Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*, arrived for the first time in Angers as an emissary from the occupied homeland in the winter of 1940. Later, at the conclusion of his second mission, he would be the first credible witness to personally inform members of Allied governments about the Nazi extermination of Jews in Poland. He didn't have such horrible news to report on his first trip but what he had to say was enough, we know, for the Polish government-in-exile to falsify his report so that Allied governments or public opinion in the West would not be informed about the extent of anti-Jewish feelings in Polish society. The Nazis, noted Karski, were able to make of the Jewish question "something akin to a narrow bridge upon which the Germans and a large portion of Polish society are finding agreement."[4] As this is not yet the period of systematic killings of the Jews by the Nazis, what the "large portion of Polish society" apparently agrees to is not murder. Rather, it is the isolation of the Jewish people as well as the economic squeeze to which they were subjected.

THE GOVERNMENT DELEGATE, the head of the civilian underground structure in occupied Poland, was more specific in an autumn 1941 report dispatched to London: "German policies towards the Jewish minority stimulate two kinds of responses. The inhuman terror to which the Jews are subjected is universally condemned and evokes a lot of pity. But the social and particularly the economic isolation are generally approved. A certain fear, especially in merchant circles, goes with it—namely that the Jews might eventually return to their dominant position in the economy."[5] Frankly, there was no dominant position in the economy that the Jews could return to because they had never occupied one. But a Jewish owner might return to his street-corner store, which a Polish plenipotentiary had taken over. A very personalized feeling of resentment ran through every community. Jewish survivors who after the war returned to their hometowns were generally met with hostility by the local population, and not infrequently killed, presumably because of fear that they might claim back their material possessions or children, who had been sheltered and raised in Polish families.

On September 25, 1941—three months after the beginning of the Soviet-Nazi war and after the first wave of mass killings of Jews—the commander of the Home Army, Grot-Rowecki, sent the following telegram to London:

> I report that all statements and policies of the government and the National Council concerning the Jews in Poland create the worst possible impression in the country and facilitate propaganda directed against the government. This was the reaction to the "day of the Jewry" (*Dzień Żydowstwa*), to Szwarcbard's speech, to the nomination of Lieberman, as well as to greetings conveyed in a radio broadcast on the occasion of the Jewish New Year. Please accept it as a fact that the overwhelming majority of the country is anti-Semitic. Even socialists are not an exception in this respect. The only differences concern how to deal with the Jews. Almost nobody advocates the adoption of German methods. Even secret organizations remaining under the influence of the prewar activists in the Democratic Club or the Socialist Party adopt the postulate of emigration as a solution of the Jewish problem. This became as much of a truism as, for instance, the necessity to eliminate Germans. . . . Anti-Semitism is widespread now.

Nor would these attitudes change under the impact of the Holocaust. If we move three years forward, to the eve of the Warsaw Uprising, when the overwhelming majority of the Polish Jews had been killed, we find the political emissary Celt coming back from his mission to Poland with the following message:

> The Government Delegate asked me to inform you that according to him "the government exaggerates in its love for Jews." The Delegate understands that such moves may be necessary for the sake of foreign policy, but he advises prudence and restraint. Both under General Sikorski and now, the government is too forthcoming in its philosemitism, because the country does not like Jews.

The Government Delegate and the commander

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the Home Army, to whom information filtered from all over the occupied territory, were in the best position to generalize about the Poles' state of mind during these years.

Now that we have heard about prevailing attitudes among the Poles from the horses' mouths, it might be possible to consider some hypotheses about what actually happened, and why. Take any Polish book on the subject, preferably one with a happy ending, written by or about Jewish survivors who lived through the war assisted by the Poles. One realizes immediately from such a reading that Jews in hiding and Poles helping them were vulnerable to denunciation. German functionaries, Gestapo agents, or professional blackmailers of Jews (*szmalcownik*), as the literature on the subject reveals, were few and far between in occupied Poland, and therefore the likelihood of a chance encounter with any of them was negligible for a Jew in hiding. Yet the Nazis and their victims had to be brought together. Reading Bartoszewski's and Lewin's volume, *Righteous Among Nations*, is the most sobering experience in this respect, since it makes one realize the precariousness of a Jew's existence among the Poles, due precisely to a generalized, diffuse hostility towards the Jews. The historical record shows, I think, beyond reasonable doubt that a constant danger for a Jew hiding on the Aryan side, *and for the Pole helping him to do so*, came from a casual passer-by, a house superintendent, a neighbor, a child playing in the courtyard who might, and frequently did, reveal his presence outside the ghetto.[6] It is not that the Poles approved the murder of Jews. But they did, as the Government Delegate noted, approve the Jews' isolation, their confinement in the ghettos. In the introduction to a 1947 book of personal testimonies by Jewish survivors we read that several Poles who had helped Jews during the war asked that their names be deleted, because they feared hostile reactions in their own communities if their wartime deeds became known.[7]

The sad truth is that those who helped the Jews during the war had to be on the lookout not for Gestapo agents, but for their own neighbors. Of course, in the underground secrecy was required as well. But except for Gestapo agents and collaborators everybody, in a manner of speaking, was involved in the conspiracy. Precisely the opposite was true with respect to Jews. Except for those who were actively involved in helping them to hide, everybody was against it. Of course some would more and some would less actively demonstrate their opposition, just as some would display more active and some less active involvement in the underground. Thus, the folklore of the occupation includes innumerable stories about the incompetence of the underground, how people were sent to a wrong address, mumbled some absurd password only to be patiently directed to an altogether different house or apartment by a neighbor who wasn't involved in this particular conspiracy but knew where the action was nonetheless, *and covered up for it*. But I don't recall ever reading such stories à propos of hiding Jews. In casual conversations with acquaintances or even strangers people would openly discuss their black-market transactions (to mention another activity prohibited by the Nazis under penalty of death), and the young in particular would cue (by dressing in a certain way for instance), hint, exaggerate, or even falsely ascribe to themselves, connections and credits earned in the underground. But I have yet to see a memoir or a piece of literature where some protagonist boasts in casual company that he was hiding Jews. Not only would this be dangerous (as we know, Poles lived dangerously in those days and were proud of it) but, worse, it would be rather awkward. It would most likely not meet with social approval.

What differentiated conspiratorial work from helping the Jews in Poland during World War II was not, primarily, the relative severity of sanctions but that, by contrast with involvement in the anti-Nazi conspiracy, there were relatively few people involved in assisting the Jews and they were not supported in these efforts by the society around them. Indeed, that they were few and that they were engulfed in a social vacuum explains the difference in relative severity of sanctions, not the other way around. This follows from a simple and well-established sociological principal according to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which the enforcement of any norm of behavior depends to a significant degree on whether the group accepts the validity of the norm. Had the German-stipulated norm "Do not help the Jews" been as unacceptable to the Poles as the norm "Do not engage in patriotic activity" or "Do not engage in market transactions" it would have been enforced more or less as successfully as the other two. If every other Pole had his Jew, just as he had his black-market contacts or conspiratorial connections, the Germans could not have killed everybody they caught helping a Jew, just as they didn't kill every conspirator they apprehended.

So that the argument does not hinge solely on a sociological principle, let me rephrase it. We know three things about the subject of our inquiry: about Polish attitudes towards the Jews during the war—that there was widespread anti-Semitism; about Polish behavior—that relatively few people were involved in helping the Jews; and about the German-created context—that the death penalty was meted out for helping Jews to hide. The cost-benefit explanation entirely ignores attitudes, i.e., the issue of anti-Semitism, and explains Polish behavior solely by the German-created context. What I have suggested as an alternative explanation links attitudes, behavior, and situational context together.

The Nazis did not want Poles to kill Jews, or even to help kill Jews; they only wanted the Poles not to interfere with the Jews' isolation—and to this injunction the Poles, by and large, consented.

The difficulty Poles face in confronting the wartime history of Polish-Jewish relations, indeed in confronting the issue of Polish anti-Semitism in general, derives from the incompatibility of Poles' behavior with the dominant romantic interpretation of Poland's destiny. Influential to this day, the romantic imagination postulates two ideas with political implications: a conviction about righteousness and exemplary destiny of the oppressed, the smaller, and the weaker as well as a belief in the universality of freedom. The poet Adam Mickiewicz wrote: *"Ibi patria, ubi male:* whenever in Europe liberty is suppressed and fought for, there is the battle of your country"; "For your freedom and ours" has been the watchword of Polish patriots; there is, in short, a brotherhood of victims. Both ideas—that the persecuted weak are right until proven otherwise, and that liberty of mankind is indivisible—were embedded in Poland's fate throughout the nineteenth century when the country was partitioned by more powerful neighbors and when its patriots *also* fought continuously against oppression of other peoples. This fate allegedly condemns Poland to an exemplary historical destiny: Polish messianism showed no hesitation in identifying the country as "the Christ of Nations."

But suddenly, and most uncomfortably, at the outset of Polish independence in 1918 the interpretative key to the alleged Polish destiny has to be put aside in view of the subsequent treatment of ethnic minorities in Poland. It is rather ironic, but as soon as the Poles laid their hands on the levers of a modern state, that is, precisely at the moment their destiny ought to have begun its fulfillment, when they got "bigger" and stronger than anybody else within the polity, they turned against the smaller and weaker ones. Virtuous *qua* victim, Poland at the first opportunity turned into a victimizer, as if the Polish struggles for liberation throughout the nineteenth century were imbued with a different spirit than the liberty Poles had enjoyed at the beginning of the twentieth. The reason is easy to find: whereas the national liberation struggle is about rights of the majority to self-determination, political liberty is about minority rights, and in the Polish tradition the difference was never appreciated. The nation—a whole—was the only subject of libertarian aspirations. And then, to seal the betrayal of their own destiny, Poles failed during the war to recognize a fellow victim not in some faraway land, but right across the street. A combination of anti-Semitic prejudice among the Poles and deliberate, skillful Nazi policies leading to dehumanization of ghetto residents resulted in excluding the Jews, in Polish eyes, from the brotherhood of victims.

The double February/March 1983 issue of the Catholic periodical *Znak*, published in Cracow, devoted all of its 574 pages to the Jews. A photograph appears at the beginning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the volume showing three young people with their hands up walking by heavily armed German soldiers. At the bottom of the page a date: "April 19, 1943," and a caption: "The beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising." In the middle of the page, the dedication—"To the memory of those who chose to die with dignity." It takes a while to discover in this heartfelt gesture of commemoration an inadvertently committed act of discrimination denying dignity to three million Polish Jews who went resigned to their death. Somehow Poles must have been very effectively socialized to the notion of sacrifice with a happy ending, to the image of resurrection, to the idea that one may give up one's life but in a calculated and deliberate fashion—for a cause, all pointing out reassuringly that through some cunning of history the victim always comes out ahead. There is no place in such a bittersweet philosophy of history for the calamity and waste of the Jewish Holocaust. □

This article was given as a lecture at Oxford University on November 30, 1985.

Notes

[1] In addition to the article "Two Motherlands, Two Patriotisms," Lipski addressed the issue of Polish-Jewish relations during the war in two speeches delivered originally at important anniversary celebrations. In March 1981 at the Warsaw University, where a symposium was organized in connection with the 13th anniversary of the so-called "March [1968] Events," Lipski read a long paper entitled "The Jewish Problem;" two years later he spoke at the fortieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. All three texts, plus a few other essays on contemporary Polish politics, were published in 1985 in a book entitled *Two Motherlands and Other Essays* distributed by an independent publishing house, "Mysl." The substance of all three of Lipski's statements on Polish-Jewish relations during the war is the same. Indeed, he uses occasionally identical phrasing. All quotes are from the 1985 "Mysl" edition.

[2] Rafael Scharf and Andrzej Szczypiorski, *"Polacy i Żydzi - podsumowanie dyskusji," Kultura* (Paris; Institut Littéraire, No. 11, 1979), pp. 124–125.

[3] Here follow two passages produced somewhere in the middle of the Polish political spectrum, not by the radical right or even the nationalist press—published in the periodical *Poland* (*Polska*) originating in a milieu of Sanacja sympathizers, and in a brochure put out by the Labor Party. In the December 17, 1942, issue of *Poland* we read in an article about prostitution entitled "The Ways of the Volksdeutsche" that: "Hitlerite periodicals and propaganda publications constantly speak of Jews as criminals against humanity, they put out many well-deserved accusations against them, they condemn the Jews ruthlessly for depravation and demoralization of the young generation as pornographers and pimps. . . . And yet an interesting phenomenon ought to be registered. Jews have been locked behind walls in Polish cities or bestially murdered. One would think then that this scourge and immoral occupation would disappear from our cities, just as Germans had assured us. But this horrible and debasing occupation was taken over very eagerly in our cities from the Jews by the Volksdeutsche, . . . who are not different from the Jews at all, they only emulate their ways. It is inconceivable for a decent Pole to have anything to do with these practices. Let us make sure that this horrible activity remains the exclusive domain of the chosen nations—the Volksdeutsche and the Jews. It is their privilege." The Labor Party brochure, which tackled a much more ambitious topic—"The everlasting essence of the spirit of Russia"—offered the following analysis: ". . . in Russia, which was exhausted by war, Jews have entered upon the stage. With the quick, expert glance of hardened business people, they determined that their chance had come. They decided that Russia offers the best opportunity to carry out the bloody assault awaited for centuries against Christianity and the Western culture. . . . Judaism began to shape up the new face of the spirit of Bolshevik Russia. And though Poland entirely rejected this nefarious system the danger persists, because the source of epidemics is so close."

[4] Quoted after David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews* (in manuscript), p. 32.

[5] For this and following references to archival sources containing relevant documents see my *Polish Society Under German Occupation—the Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 184–186.

[6] As in this experience of a ten-year-old Jewish boy: "No sooner had I stood by the river when some boys came along, somehow noticed that I was a Jew and, in order to thoroughly convince themselves that I was, three of the rascals jumped me. They pulled down my trousers and started shouting at the top of their voices: 'Jew, Jew, Jew.' Then they grabbed me, twisted my arms behind my back and started deliberating whether to drown me or to hand me over to the German police. I took advantage of a moment when one of them loosened his hold of me, kicked him, and ran away." There weren't any socially marginal people involved in this encounter, or scum—just children. Indeed the Polish boys got a thrashing at home when their parents learned about the episode from a woman whom the Jewish child told about it, and who knew his father. This episode is recounted in Wladyslaw Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939-1945* (London: Earlscourt Publications Ltd., 1969), pp. 411–412.

[7] Maria Hochberg-Mariańska's introduction to *Dzieci Oskarżają (Children are Accusing)* (Kraków: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, 1947). See also Nechama Tec's memoir, *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael Harrington

Mitterrand's Term: A Balance Sheet

Where the French Socialists Succeeded and Failed

When François Mitterrand came to power in 1981, he promised a "rupture with capitalism." If his policies of the first year were not the clean break with the past they were supposed to be, they were an audaciously consistent and quite socialist version of that Keynesianism which, in its technocratic guise, had dominated France since 1945. One might argue that Mitterrand had discovered, and followed the path of, the radical John Maynard Keynes defined by Joan Robinson and systematically ignored in Britain and the United States. The French center-right, which dominated the postwar period until Mitterrand's victory, imitated the more conventional Keynes. As Jacques Chirac, one of the leaders of the anti-Socialist opposition, put it in 1985, "the social democratic model of society... more or less inspired all of the governments of our country since the Liberation."

France, then, was a case in point of the triumph of Fordism* throughout the West. There was an ironic confirmation of this fact, largely unrecognized at the time, which was to cause Mitterrand trouble after he took power. In the months prior to the election, the arch free marketeer of France and prime minister under Giscard, Raymond Barre, took some planks from the Socialist program that he was denouncing and attempted to use government power to reflate the economy in time for the vote. He provided various subsidies and cut the payroll contributions for medical care. But, since the cost of health continued to rise, this stimulus helped create the "Mitterrand" deficit of 1982. The point, however, is not to excuse Mitterrand by indicting Barre, but to say that Fordist assumptions were shared—left, right, and center—in France in 1981.

And yet, Mitterrand's version of Fordism was distinctively socialist in both the traditional and new sense of the word. On the one hand, the benefits he inaugurated were systematically biased toward the poorest people in the society; on the other hand he sought to create not simply growth, but a new model of consumption, a qualitative rather than a quantitative change. He simultaneously insisted on an industrial policy that was to be based on a dynamic nationalized sector, and pushed for the reduction of the workweek and year. He honored the clenched fist of working-class history and the poetic rose of May 1968.

Strangely enough, one critical problem with the application of this vision had to do with the Socialists' failure to understand how badly their predecessors had managed the economy. If they had realized that Giscard and Barre had structurally weakened France so that the old Gaullist *dirigisme* no longer worked, they might have hesitated in trying to create a much more imaginative, "68-ish," version of that

*"Fordism", explained in an earlier chapter of the book, refers to the mass-production technology pioneered by Ford, the blue-collar working class and its political movement that resulted from that technology, and the government programs that were developed in response to these complex shifts—unemployment insurance, Social Security, the provision of a framework for collective bargaining which gave some weight to the wage claims of workers, etc. These programs had the effect of "socializing" a portion of society's consumption by guaranteeing minimal levels of buying power no matter what the state of the business cycle. "Fordism" was named after Henry Ford—by Antonio Gramsci, among others—because he was one of the first to realize that mass production required mass consumption. Even though Fordism was realized through government programs rather than by an agreement among sophisticated capitalists, the fact that the system, for all of the real gains for the people which it entailed, favored the corporate rich was very much in his spirit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same system. Perhaps a bit of history is in order to place this into its proper context.

Postwar Capitalism

FRENCH CAPITALISM BEFORE WORLD WAR II had been paternalistic, family-controlled, anti-innovative. Unions were weak—their strength rose sharply during the Popular Front but declined quickly after that brief interlude—and national labor legislation, like mandatory vacations, was much more important than collective-bargaining agreements. The Resistance was conscious of these trends and was determined not simply to defeat the Nazis, but to build a new society after the victory. Communists, Socialists, and social Catholics, as well as General de Gaulle himself, were committed to a new beginning. As Richard Kuisel put it, "What was unique about France was the way a collective sense of national decline and disenchantment with the liberal [free-enterprise] order provided the fundamental impetus for change."

There were those who even expected "the tomorrows that sing." These did not, of course, come, but there was a considerable transformation in that first period after the Liberation. Consumption was partially socialized, as it was in every Western nation. But there was a distinctively French accent to this Fordism. The social security system, which was set up in 1945, was supposed to provide a "general regime" for everyone in the country, but Gallic corporatism soon amended that dream. The system was modified by "special regimes" that favored the interests of particular groups, and it was financed in a way that helped the middle and upper classes and discriminated against the workers. There was also a considerable nationalization of industry, including the takeover of Renault, destined to be a symbol of left-wing success for years to come.

This was the period when Jean Monnet and his associates introduced the idea and practice of national planning (which they borrowed in part from the American experience with the War Production Board, a success the United States was determined to forget as quickly as possible). As time went on, structural changes that had been undertaken in the name of a radical future became increasingly technocratic. French "indicative planning" has been rightly called a "conspiracy in the public interest" on the part of the corporations and the government—a conspiracy that, not surprisingly, enormously benefited the corporate conspirators.

When de Gaulle returned to power in 1958, and particularly after the Algerian war ended in the early 1960s, there was another period of rapid economic and social transformation. De Gaulle embraced a supply-side Fordism with a vengeance as the state was mobilized to create large-scale industries capable of competing on the world market. Between 1960 and 1973—the heyday of the Great Prosperity—the GDP rose by 5.6 percent (almost double the rate of the 1970s). The blue-collar working class, one of the surest signs of Fordist development, rose by 50 percent, compared to a 33 percent increase in the labor force as a whole. But at the same time, there was a considerable growth in the new salaried strata, a harbinger of the coming crisis of Fordism *and* an important constituency for a revived French socialism.

During those Gaullist years of modernization and national Keynesianism, real wages were held down in order to finance the rationalization of the economy. More broadly, there was social traditionalism even as economic change was radically transforming the country. So it was that, in 1968, a student revolt against the bureaucratic conservatism of the educational system set off a general strike of the working class. That explosion was part of a similar phenomenon that occurred throughout the West as the very success of Fordism emboldened both the workers and the emergent social strata. The barricades of revolutionary students in the Latin Quarter got most of the world media attention in France in 1968, but that was only the most obvious aspect of a complex event.

The economic agreements between the government and the workers (the "rue de Grenelle" compact) had a much more profound impact on France than the graffiti on the Sorbonne walls, symptomatic as the latter were. The minimum wage was indexed and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

raised by 30 percent; the average wage was increased by 11 percent. This was part of a larger trend whereby the social wage in France went up dramatically throughout the late sixties and seventies. De Gaulle and the conservatives thus responded to the first signs of a crisis by an intensification of the Fordist strategy.

It was, however, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing who was to face up to the crisis itself in the 1970s. He became president just as the French, and world, economies entered the recession of 1974-75. But he did not turn his back on the social-wage policies that de Gaulle had adopted in 1968. On the contrary, Giscard presented himself as a "social democrat" of sorts, paying a visit to a prison where he shook hands with some of the inmates, inviting a group of immigrant workers to breakfast with him at the Élysée Palace.

Then, in 1975, Giscard's prime minister, Jacques Chirac, launched a government-stimulated recovery with large export subsidies. Like Mitterrand later, Giscard faced both a balance-of-payments and an inflation problem shortly after he undertook his expansionist program. In part, these "leftist" responses to the crisis—including measures that made it more difficult to fire a worker—were a tribute to the fact that Mitterrand had come within 1 percent of winning the presidency in 1974 and that the Union of the Left, which united the Socialists and the Communists, seemed to have the potential of gaining a majority in the National Assembly in 1978.

But then in 1976 Giscard appointed Raymond Barre prime minister and finally made a turn to the right, a move that was facilitated by the breakdown of the Union of the Left when the Communists realized that they had become junior partners in that alliance. Even with Giscard's shift, though, the conservatism was primarily in economic policy and the government remained committed to high social expenditures despite lowered growth rates. Between 1965 and 1973, the public spending portion of the GDP was around 35-36 percent. By 1978, it had climbed to 39.5 percent and in 1980, it reached 42.8 percent. Transfer payments had accounted for 20.1 percent of disposable income in 1970; they had reached 33.7 percent by 1980. All this, mind you, under the "right," which has now developed the usual case of amnesia about its own history.

But Giscard did change on the economic front, a fact that was to have fateful consequences for Mitterrand and the Socialists. While de Gaulle had sought to create a coherent and modern economy within France, Giscard and Barre followed a line of "industrial redeployment." The government would no longer support the "crippled ducks" of industry. Rather, it would adapt France to the world market, emphasizing those productive activities that it could do best (the "*creneaux*") and relying on imports for the rest.

EXPORTS DID INDEED CLIMB—but weighted in the direction of the Third World—and so did imports. The latter were high-tech capital and consumer goods, and their importance was underlined by an increasing foreign presence within the French economy itself. At the beginning of the Common Market, France produced 85 percent of its equipment needs, but when the crisis hit in the 1970s, that figure had dropped to 74 percent. The dependence on capital goods was even more severe, reaching 50 percent under Giscard. That meant that rapid expansion tended to yield an increasing balance-of-payments deficit as foreign machines were installed in French factories. Growth had become, in part at least, perverse, as de Gaulle's heirs mortgaged French economic sovereignty and made the general's worst dreams come true—but under circumstances that were to bedevil his most severe critics.

Ironically, the Socialists' critique of Giscard in the 1981 electoral campaign was too gentle. They did not realize how profoundly he had undercut the Gaullist idea of a self-sufficient France, or how rundown the industrial plant had been allowed to become. Worse, they made the same underestimation of conservative failure when they prepared their own plans.

The London *Economist* summarized the consequences in a 1984 retrospect on Mitterrand's victory: "The Socialists thought they would nationalize a phalanx of rich industrial concerns that could be used to boost output, jobs, and national wealth. Instead, with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one or two exceptions, the state had acquired, at high cost, a collection of debt-ridden, wheezing remnants of the go-go years of Gaullist giantism." The moderate Fordism of the right had failed—and now the Socialists proposed to initiate a radical Fordism on that structurally flawed base.

If it is fair to argue that François Mitterrand inherited many pressing problems from his conservative predecessors, one must add, as Alain Lipietz has remarked, that it was inexcusable for the Socialists to have been ignorant of that fact. They summoned the nation to take a voyage of economic adventure in a leaky boat. That conservatives were responsible for most of the leaks must be taken into consideration in any moral accounting—but it is politically and economically irrelevant.

Strangely, the French Socialist experience was dramatic proof of an eminently left-wing theory. Mitterrand and company had insisted strenuously on this point while on the road to power—and then ignored it in the moment of their triumph.

Capitalism, they rightly said, had a powerful logic of its own. It demanded, for instance, a certain minimal level of profits to make the system work, since even a nationalized enterprise must have a surplus to finance new investment and depreciation. In a mixed economy, there was a rationale for the socialist promotion of profits in both the public and private sectors. The social democrats of Europe, the French left went on to say, had obeyed this capitalist imperative and therefore, even though they had made significant reforms, they had done little or nothing to change the structure of power and wealth.

We are not "social democrats," the French insisted prior to 1981; we are "socialists." The "rupture with capitalism" was supposed to create a radical-system logic based upon the creation of a new, decentralized mode of social life and of worker participation in all management decisions. In fact, the French Socialists in power were driven to adapt to capitalism to a much greater degree than the social democrats who had come in during the Great Prosperity, when there was room to maneuver.

Let me be fair. Mitterrand and his comrades had collided with the structural problems of modern capitalism, and these are neither French nor confined to the 1980s. How does the left gradually and democratically transform a system when it must operate within that system? If one abandons the Leninist illusion that it is possible in an advanced capitalist democracy simply to "smash" the bourgeois state and proceed to the revolutionary reconstruction of the entire society—as most European communists and all European socialists had done by 1981—then how does one carry out radical change?

That problem has been around since the end of World War I when the socialist parties of Europe were suddenly confronted with the contradictions of partial, limited power within a system hostile to that power. The agitator's myth of a sudden, dramatic leap from capitalism to socialism perished the minute such a reality intervened. In 1981, in France—that is, in the middle of a world crisis in a second-rank economy—these limitations were intolerable. Yet the Socialists, at the moment of Fordist failure, looked for the kind of economic growth only attained at the height of Fordist success.

One reason for this error was that the French left had been in opposition too long. Between 1928 and 1958, the parties of the left—the Socialists, Communists, and Radicals—had won a majority in every election, but had been unable to unite, and leadership passed to the center-right. Then, from 1958 to 1981, de Gaulle and his heirs utterly dominated the Fifth Republic. During more than half a century, then, one counted the periods of left dominance in months. Indeed, there was even a mystique that made a virtue out of this tragedy: It was seen as a glory of the Popular Front that it put through its reforms quickly and then failed. Now, however, Mitterrand's seven-year presidency and the Socialists' absolute majority in the Assembly did not allow the luxury of such glorious defeats. They were stuck with power. What were they going to do with it?

When François Mitterrand first managed to recreate a Socialist party in 1971, the left was still under the spell of the dramatic events of May 1968. So the first program was both "Marxistical" (*marxisant* in French) and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1968-ish. It talked of both "the dictatorship of profit" and a "new model of growth." It was not enough, the Socialists said, simply to live better. One must live in a new way. But when the rhetoric was discounted, the policy prescriptions were Keynesian—radically Keynesian, but Keynesian nevertheless.

Mass consumption, the 1971 program argued in the classic Fordist mode, is necessary for capital accumulation. So "the struggle for the increase in wages is far from counterposed in itself to the logic of the capitalist system." But a new accent was heard in a dispute between the Socialists and their Communist partners. The French Communists, one of the most Stalinist of parties in the democratic world, were for straightforward nationalization. But the Socialists, acting on the basis of a variety of traditions, were hostile to that idea.

Many of the tendencies in the French workers' movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were opposed to government ownership. Proudhon, Jaurès, and Guesde were all concerned lest the "cop state" (*l'état-gendarme*) turn into the "boss state" (*l'état-patron*). Then the semianarchist focus of the 1968 rising revived that suspicion and the emergent Catholic left—sometimes called the "second left"—took it up. The Communists stuck to their beloved Soviet model. The Socialists stressed decentralization, worker self-management, a new kind of participatory democracy at the point of production.

In 1971, the newly united Socialist party was still relatively cautious in policy matters, even though its language was bold. But then, in 1975, at the Congress of Pau, and even more dramatically in 1979, at the Congress of Metz, it announced the "rupture with capitalism." Small wonder that, on the rainy May night in 1981, when the Parisian Socialists celebrated Mitterrand's victory, there were those in the crowd who chanted, "Mitterrand, du soleil!" ("Mitterrand, give us some sunshine!") That spirit, the product of a sudden and stunning victory after years in the political wilderness, did not dispose the new government to probe the weaknesses of the system they had so relentlessly criticized.

The social policies and priorities of François Mitterrand and Ronald Reagan were diametrically opposed. Yet the socialist strategy of the one and the supply-side tactics of the other shared a common assumption: that growth on the old Fordist model was still quite possible (Reaganites, like the economist Arthur Laffer, often described themselves as John Kennedy Keynesians). Reagan did indeed stumble into a demand-side Keynesian recovery that had little to do with his program and much to do with the exceptional position of the United States in the world. But unlike Reagan, Mitterrand was not temporarily exempt from the rules of the market. So he failed in the great experiment of 1981-82, and then, ironically, did rather well in following capitalist policies with socialist modifications between 1982 and 1986. This, however, is not what he and the French Socialists originally had in mind.

One of the centerpieces of the first Mitterrand year—during which practically every campaign promise was redeemed—was the increase in buying power for the least-paid workers. The minimum-wage law in France was baptized the "*Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel de Croissance*" ("the Minimum Wage of Growth") after 1968 when all sides were agreed that growth would go on forever. The inevitable acronym for the law was *le SMIC*, and those who received that wage were called the *smicards*. They were, and are, the rough equivalent of the working poor in the United States. The new government practiced a "solidaristic" wage policy, i.e., providing the greatest increases for those at the bottom of the occupational structure in an attempt to decrease inequality in the working class. Between March of 1981, shortly before the Mitterrand victory, and July of 1982, when second thoughts had already begun, the *smicards* saw their pay rise by 29 percent. In the economy as a whole, the average hourly wage went up by 16 percent between the first trimester of 1981 and the first trimester of 1982. Given the double-digit inflation inherited from Giscard and Barre, that translated into an increase in real buying power of 3.5 percent. At the same time, social benefits, measured in real terms, went up by 6.2 percent.

The French Socialists were well aware that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such policies would, all other things being equal, increase the cost of labor, particularly in small and medium enterprises (which were more likely to have low-wage workers) and in labor-intensive industries. But they assumed that the virtuous circle of growth would, on the classic Fordist model, save them from that contradiction. After all, the experts at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—an exclusive club of the rich nations—predicted in June of 1981 that the world economy was on the way to recovery and said that its member countries would experience 2 percent growth in GNP volume in 1982, with a brisk increase in trade as well. If that had happened, if the French recovery of 1981-82 had been part of the worldwide surge, then all of the Socialists' problems would hardly have been solved, but they would certainly have been much easier to deal with.

So the Socialists thought—and the idea was not at all preposterous at the time—that their social expenditures would enlarge the market and encourage business to expand. Then, even though wages were going up, unit costs would come down because of a huge increase in volume and productivity gains from an optimistic work force. And in the second half of 1981, France did indeed buck the international trends, in part—ironically—because of Raymond Barre's attempt to put Keynesianism to work reelecting Giscard. *But the expansion was nowhere near vigorous enough to compensate for the rise in wage costs resulting from Mitterrand's eminently decent policies.*

A MAVERICK FRENCH ECONOMIST who sometimes advised Mitterrand in this period, Serge-Christophe Kolm, drew some important conclusions from this experience. It is almost always wrong, Kolm argued, to try to redistribute income through wage increases because there is always the danger that such a policy will become, as it did in France in 1981-82, an employment disincentive. One should finance transfers from the better-off to the worst-off, he continued, by means that do not have a negative impact on the cost of production (either through income taxes or through profit-sharing not proportionate to wages, i.e., benefiting the lowest-paid the most, etc.).

Wage policy, then, for all of its excellent social values, had the unintended consequence of making it more difficult for an enterprise to hire new workers. And yet, even though I am convinced by Kolm's practical advice, it must be added that, if the hoped-for expansion had really taken place, the negative impact would have been considerably less. It would be a major error to reject some of the French Socialists' innovations that failed, not because they were inherently wrong, but because of the impossible conditions under which they were carried out. The "contracts of solidarity" are an excellent case in point.

With great imagination, the government offered a subsidy—significantly, a reduction in social security payments for new hires—to businesses that would "contract" to reduce the work day by more than two hours. In the first and strictest formulation of the policy, the company only got the tax cut if it actually employed new workers. Later on, it was realized that it was quite possible such reductions in working hours might reduce the number of firings, which was the social equivalent of new hires, and the rules were relaxed. Still, it must be sadly noted that the contracts of solidarity did not even begin to create the employment the Socialists hoped for. The reason was that even those corporations that participated, *under the economic conditions in France at that time*, did not take on new workers, but simply made do with fewer hands.

But if, under full-employment policies, it were once again possible for the left to unite social justice and efficiency, then this way of providing very specific rewards to enterprises that accomplish a public purpose strikes me as imaginative and quite usable. There were other attempts to create jobs—more hiring in the public sector, provisions allowing early retirement at age sixty, and the like—but they were overwhelmed by the contradictions of the program and the fact of the worst recession in half a century. Perhaps the most important single disappointment had to do with the failure to move toward the thirty-five-hour week. The Socialists easily introduced the fifth week of vacation for all workers as a down payment on their efforts to create employment by reducing hours *and* as a step in the direction of the new

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mode of life. That is clearly a permanent gain achieved by the Mitterrand government, and the opposition in power will not dare to repeal it. But when it came to the thirty-five-hour week, things became difficult then impossible.

There was a critical ambiguity in the thirty-five-hour week slogan. Did it mean thirty-five-hours' work at forty-hours' pay—or at thirty-five-hours' pay? If the former were the case, then even the most fervent Socialist advocate of growth understood that the resulting increase in labor costs would act as a massive employment disincentive. But if it meant thirty-five hours of work for thirty-five hours of wages, then it was essentially a work-*sharing* proposal and required that employed workers be willing to take an income cut in order to open up places for their unemployed comrades. The government came out for the latter interpretation.

The problem was, the work-sharing idea required the employed labor force to make sacrifices. Something like that happened in Sweden under Olof Palme's Socialists in 1982 and 1983. With the agreement of the unions, Palme devalued the Swedish krona, made exports more competitive, increased employment, *and* reduced the real income of those with a job, most of whom had voted for him. But Sweden (and Austria, which followed similar policies) has a labor movement that organizes almost the entire work force and is committed to "solidaristic" values. French unions, by contrast, enrolled the smallest percentage of the labor force in Europe.

THERE IS AN IMPORTANT COMPLEXITY HERE, one that Americans, with a union percentage similar to France's, don't normally understand. The more powerful a labor movement, the more pervasive its organization, the more likely it is to articulate a "general interest" rather than the particular demands of a section of the work force. In France, only the Democratic French Confederation of Labor (CFDT) supported work-shar-ing (it was influenced by its own Catholic heritage as well as by the Italian Communist party). The Communist-led federation as well as the more traditional business unionists rejected sacrifice. So Mitterrand settled for thirty-nine-hours' work at thirty-nine-hours' pay.

The result of even this meager shift was fascinating, but not too comforting for a leftist. Productivity did rise sharply in 1982, but not because enthusiastic workers made greater efforts. Rather, management tightened up its procedures and, through increased discipline, "overcompensated" for the lost time. The same thing happened, the readers of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* will remember, when the British introduced the Ten Hours Law in the middle of the nineteenth century.

So this centerpiece of the Socialist program, a synthesis of the demands of the old and new lefts, turned out to be quite ambivalent and resulted in the creation of very few jobs. That problem was further compounded, because the way in which the Socialist reforms were financed led to a greater deterioration in the employment situation.

The problem had already been posed—and in no way solved—under Giscard. If one tries to deal with the crisis of Fordism by raising social benefits and protecting the jobless, which Giscard did, then at a time of falling government income as a result of faltering growth it is necessary to raise taxes. In France, however, the tax system is heavily skewed toward levies on employers (in American terms, "payroll taxes"). In the 1980s, income taxes took only 5.6 percent of the GDP as compared to 10.8 percent in West Germany, France's main European competitor. But total taxes—adding in social security and consumption charges—were 44.07 percent of the GDP in France as against 31.9 percent in West Germany. If, then, taxes were increased to deal with the problems of the crisis, hiring a new worker becomes more expensive, profits are reduced, investment falls, and joblessness goes up as a result.

Under such circumstances, "soaking the rich" by raising taxes on *production* is self-defeating. As Alain Lipietz well put it, "to make capital pay . . . when one expects it to create jobs is an insoluble contradiction." This is one of those utterly unfair limitations that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the autocratic power of money places upon the democratic power of the electorate. There are many things that might be done about it—making the French social security tax progressive rather than regressive is an obvious step—but it is impossible, if one takes the tax system as a given, to stimulate growth through a fiscal policy that manufactures employment disincentives for business.

In Mitterrand's case, these problems were exacerbated by the hostility of bankers, national and international, to the Socialists. The "wall of money" so often evoked by the French left is quite real, even if it is sometimes used as an excuse. In May of 1981, right after Mitterrand was elected, capital flight reached 2 billion francs a day, and the right belligerently asserted that the Socialists would bring about a ruinous inflation. That was a case of critics living in glass houses throwing rocks. Raymond Barre's "strong franc" to curb "imported inflation" had failed miserably, and when Mitterrand took over, prices were already rising at a double-digit rate.

In the days after the presidential election, several of Mitterrand's comrades, including his arch-intraparty rival, Michel Rocard, rightly told him to devalue the franc at once. But on his inauguration day, the new president told his prime minister, "One does not devalue the money of a country that has just given you a vote of confidence." Mitterrand was wrong in this proud position, but that is not to say that devaluation would have solved all his problems. It would have cheapened exports but, precisely because Giscard and Barre had so radically weakened France's industrial base, it would also have made all those capital goods that had to be imported that much more expensive. Still, on balance, devaluation would have been a positive move, and it was not made because of the euphoria attendant upon a sudden and unexpected gift of power.

There was yet another consequence of the inherited structural weaknesses of the economy: The Socialist stimulus created new jobs in West Germany, Japan, and the United States, as much as, or more than, in France. The industrial plant was simply not capable of taking advantage of the burst of prosperity that took place in the second half of 1981 and early 1982. In the first half of 1982, imports from West Germany rose by 29 percent, even though the volume of world trade was being reduced.

The "planetary New Deal" that the Socialists proposed did not save them from these contradictions. This idea owed much to Mitterrand's comrade, and president of the Socialist International, Willy Brandt. Brandt's commission on North-South economic relations had urged an international recovery from the "common crisis" of the rich and poor lands. In this view, a concerted shift of technology and funds from North to South would create booms for the affluent as well as justice for the wretched of the earth.

That strategy was never put forward as a way out of the crisis for a single, second-rank economy. Moreover, it was hardly designed to work at a time when the nonoil Third World was still reeling from the second oil shock of 1979 and the impact of soaring American interest rates on its energy costs and debt burdens. In a sense, Giscard had made France too dependent upon its trade with the Third World. Between 1973 and 1978, when the government was vigorously subsidizing exports, commerce with the developing countries rose by a whopping 191 percent (compared to a 99 percent increase with the advanced economies). A goodly portion of those sales was classically "Fordist" goods in public projects (airports, desalination equipment, dams). Thus, the crisis of mass production struck a cruel blow at the export sector and was much more gentle with West Germany, which specialized in quality and high-tech goods.

In this setting, the vision of France taking the lead in a "planetary New Deal" was consigned to the museum of old rhetoric. The Socialists, after all, could not manage to follow their own *national* Keynesian strategy. Worse, the "external constraint," above all the limits that a growing balance-of-payments deficit placed upon Paris in its internal economic policy, became one of the principal causes of the failure of the domestic socialist vision.

But then the Socialists had something of an answer to this constellation of problems. They

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were going to reshape the structure of the economy through an industrial policy based on dynamic nationalized companies. And so they did, but not at all in the way they anticipated.

Nationalization as Panacea

TO MANY PEOPLE, nationalization is the sovereign leftist remedy. Mitterrand, it is thought, was acting on the basis of a worn-out formula in 1982. That is to miss the essential.

In the immediate postwar period in Europe, the nationalized sector was expanded in almost every country (the most dramatic exception was Sweden under the Socialists!). In some cases, this was done in the name of socialist (or anti-Fascist) ideals, e.g., Britain, France; in some cases, it was a result of the nationalization of enterprises that had cooperated with the Nazis, e.g., France, Austria. The experience in every case was disillusioning for a movement that once had thought public ownership was the key to justice and freedom. Nationalization bailed out incompetent private capitalists by compensating them for broken-down mines and factories; it often operated in a very capitalist fashion; and, as the crisis deepened, the public sector sometimes dug in to resist modernization and change. By 1981, there was hardly a socialist in all of Europe who thought that nationalization was *the* innovation of the left.

This was one of the reasons why the French Socialists talked of "self-managed" socialism, of decentralization and participatory ownership. So one of the priorities of the new Socialist government was to increase the rights of workers on the shop floor. But there was another motive for taking over from private corporations and it was somewhat strange: The Socialists were furious that the capitalists refused to behave like capitalists.

In the 1970s, the nationalized sector in France had been much more dynamic than the private companies. Renault was an internationally competitive carmaker; the Airbus, in some ways a spin-off from the Concorde project, had taken a portion of the world airplane market away from the Americans; and in France itself, Electricity of France (EDF) and the rail system (SNCF) were fast-moving enterprises. So part of the Socialist critique of Giscard and the right was that the capitalists had failed to carry out their traditional role of accumulation and innovation. If, they said, private enterprise would not invest in the future, then the public would have to do so.

The nationalizations, then, were somewhat schizophrenic: They were to be part of the new mode of life and, at the same time, the Archimedean point for industrial policy. The change in the human character of production was to be implemented through the Auroux laws, giving workers a voice on the factory floor; the nationalizations were to spark investment and competition. Moreover, the takeovers were focused on industries that were already semipublic (airplane construction, steel, nonferrous metals, all heavily involved with the state for years) or were considered to be vanguard technologies of national importance (electronics, chemistry, glass). There was, in short, a very empirical, nonideological argument for what Mitterrand proposed in this area.

On the day after the Socialist government decided to go ahead with the nationalizations, the newspaper *Le Quotidien de Paris* headlined a story: "France Entered Socialism Yesterday." That apocalyptic judgment stands in sharp contrast to the actual Socialist policy decreed for the nationalized industries later.

The letter to the administrators of the nationalized enterprises said: "You will seek, first of all, economic efficiency through a constant bettering of productivity. Every lack of efficiency would in effect have an impact on the entire French economy. The normal criteria of the management of industrial enterprises will apply to your group: The different activities should realize results that will assure the development of the enterprise and guarantee that the profitability of the invested capital will be normal." Alain Gomez, a founder of the Marxist left wing of the Socialist party, CERES, and a new official in the public sector, was even blunter: "My job is to get surplus value. . . . To be 'left' is to have a certain idea of the allocation of the national wealth. This has nothing to do with the techniques that must be put in motion to produce that wealth."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What then went wrong with such an eminently practical project?

In the long run the answer is shocking: nothing. An article in the *Financial Times* noted in early 1986 that "the assets taken over in 1982 for 45 billion francs on the basis of the prevailing stock market prices . . . are now valued at about 150 billion francs. This reflects the general increase in share prices on the Bourse which have almost trebled since the left came to power. Additionally, the newly acquired state industrial groups have carried out successful restructuring which as private enterprises they were often unwilling or unable to do—ironically because of heavy interference from the previous right-wing administration of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing."

There is obviously a profound irony here and we will return to it when we consider whether François Mitterrand might turn out to have been the savior of French capitalism. For now, we will turn to the bad news, which was much more common than the good in the first years of Mitterrand's rule. Why did the nationalizations fail to meet their goal at that time?

One answer has already been given: The Socialists did not know how broken-down the new public properties were. Then, a policy error played an important role. At the cabinet meeting at which the decision was made to go ahead with the nationalizations, there was a fateful debate that pitted Michel Rocard, Jacques Delors, and Robert Badinter against most of the rest of the ministers and (the decisive factor) against the president. There is no need, Rocard and Delors argued, for Paris to pay for 100 percent of an enterprise that is targeted for government ownership. Fifty percent is quite enough—and much less expensive. But Mitterrand went ahead with the 100 percent buyouts.

The consequences were, in part, not dissimilar to a corporate takeover with borrowed money in the United States. When that happened in the 1970s and 1980s, the acquired company had to be starved of cash in order to finance its own acquisition. Between 1981 and 1985, France paid 150 billion francs to the previous owners of newly nationalized property. It was almost impossible for a public company to show a profit while carrying such an enormous load of debt or, more precisely, for the state to do so.

Second, although the Auroux laws were unquestionably progressive (and, according to a survey by the London *Economist* in 1984, have even been accepted by those business circles that originally saw them as Bolshevism incarnate), they fell far, far short of the ideal of self-managed socialism. In essence, the workers were given the right to speak up on issues affecting their industry—which was a gain—but they got no power to make decisions. One of the consequences of genuine worker control (or even the illusion of that control) is that productivity goes up. But given the extremely limited nature of the workers' new rights—and the mood of "moroseness" that settled over the society not too long after the euphoria of May 1981—that pragmatic bonus from living up to an ideal was not forthcoming.

Third, the successful restructuring of companies wrecked by private management was a long-term proposition. In the short run, Mitterrand will probably be seen to have been much more competent than the French capitalists—but that was not exactly what the Socialists had in mind when they came to power. As a result, by the middle of 1982, the soaring hopes that had accompanied the great legislative surge—not just nationalizations, but wage policy, the fifth week of vacation, early retirement and all the rest—ended, and the Socialist government adopted a policy of capitalist rigor. Or did it?

Backtracking with Honor

THE DRAMATIC REVERSAL in French Socialist strategy gathered momentum throughout the second half of 1982 and then became official policy in March 1983. That was, of course, precisely when the Reagan administration lucked into its demand-side recovery despite its supply-side policies. As it gradually became apparent that the American economy was on the move, and France under the Socialists was not only in retreat but stagnating, the contrast between Paris and Washington was all but chiseled in stone on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, Mitterrand's retreat was even read as a homage to Reagan's philosophy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So it was that, in June of 1985, Jacques Chirac, who had launched an expansion quite similar to Mitterrand's in 1975, declared himself a born-again free enterpriser at a meeting of the opposition in Paris. There was a vogue among the intellectuals—as trendy and superficial as much of the leftism prior to 1981—for supply-side panaceas. Given the fact that, as the Bank for International Settlements so candidly recognized, Reaganomics does not apply in a second-rank economy with a vulnerable currency, one can expect widespread disillusionment on the right in the not-too-distant future if its 1986 campaign promises are kept.

What is relevant is that, all the facile assertions of Mitterrand becoming a Reaganite notwithstanding, the French Socialists remained quite socialistic in retreat. That is, at every point they tried to defend the unemployed, the poorly paid, and the others on whose behalf they had so confidently acted in 1981. They made significant, even wrenching, concessions, particularly in their acceptance of economic firings, but they attempted to mitigate the effect of their own policies at every turn.

When the government hit the brakes on consumer spending in the spring of 1982 and declared a pay pause, the *smicards* were exempted from the new rules, and there were new taxes on income and wealth. They were, if truth be told, too modest to raise much revenue, but aggressive enough to make the rich even more surly. I cite them to show that the basic socialist values persisted, even if their application was not very effective. As the democratic Marxist Alain Lipietz put it, "the sacrifices demanded of households were characterized, *as far as their allocation was concerned*, by considerations of social justice."

More broadly, the new tactics in 1982-3 did accept, but at the same time sought to minimize, more unemployment. Rather than simply allowing the jobless rate to soar and to reduce wages in that classic free-market fashion, the government adopted a program of controlled austerity. Wages were deindexed. Their real value fell and profits absorbed all the positive gains from productivity. But if the budget became more restrictive, there were also programs, borrowed from the Swedish socialists, to create public-sector jobs.

Even more to the present point, the Socialists succeeded in their efforts! That is, if one departs from the 1980 levels of unemployment, then joblessness rose between 1981 and 1984 in France by 2 points, by 3.7 points in West Germany, and by 5.2 points in Britain. At the same time, the French growth rate was more stable than that of any other industrialized country during this period.

I do not cite these facts to sugarcoat the bitter pill of Socialist failure. It is, however, of some moment that Mitterrand's France outperformed Thatcher's Britain on just about every economic index of success; yet the Western, and particularly American, press was much more understanding of the problems of Downing Street than of those in the Élysée. Moreover, one aspect of the French experience can be taken as a very empirical refutation of "supply-side" dogma: When the profits of French capital increased dramatically in 1984, investment stagnated, not the least because the profits had risen as a result of holding down consumption.

BUT ALL OF THESE QUALIFICATIONS, important as they are, are not the central lesson to be drawn here. François Mitterrand proved that a decent and humane version of Keynesianism at the service of the poorest people in his society was not adequate to deal with the crisis of the 1980s. In part, that failure was accentuated by the position of France—or, for that matter, of Europe—in the world market. Still, "Keynesianism in one country" is not possible, except for a brief period in the United States; the stimulation of mass consumption *within the old Fordist structures* will not yield the Fordist results of the 1950s and 1960s.

History, I believe, will be much kinder to the French Socialists than journalism has been. The point, however, is to learn from the mistakes and partial successes of François Mitterrand, so that the next left will not be forced into an honorable, but humilitating, retreat. □

This article is excerpted, with permission, from a forthcoming book, *The Next Left: The History of a Future* by Michael Harrington, to be published in the winter of 1987 by Henry Holt and Company. Copyright © 1986 by Michael Harrington.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

David Bensman and Roberta Lynch

Can Steel Be Saved?

An Industrial Policy That Might Still Do the Trick

A sense of the inevitable has clouded all discussions of the industrial crisis confronting our nation. Policy analysts of divergent opinions have found common ground in the view that the steel industry cannot and should not be saved. Most see its demise as intimately linked with the decline of our entire manufacturing sector: the death of smokestack industries. Some believe that no matter what America does, it can no longer compete as an industrial power against the low-wage countries of the Third World. Others hold that unless the steel industry can stand on its own, it does not "deserve" to survive. In this Darwinian economic model, the fittest would emerge, trim and tough, from the rigors of economic competition.

Underlying these views are two unexamined premises. The first is that the economic environment of the early 1980s—the strong dollar, high interest rates, huge budget deficits, and surging imports—provided a fair test of the viability of the steel industry. The second is that a sound manufacturing sector is no longer essential to the future of the United States.

BOTH PREMISES ARE FALSE. The temporary economic problems of the early 1980s made it impossible for U.S. steelmakers to compete, thus seriously exaggerating the extent or effects of the industry's backwardness. And the future prosperity of the nation will be endangered if we allow our industrial strength to wither. It is possible and necessary to revitalize America's steel industry. By doing so, we would also strengthen the entire durable goods manufacturing sector, for which cheap, high-quality steel is essential.

A program to revive steel would require large public expenditures and substantial change in economic policies. Government leaders have made a number of half-hearted attempts to save the steel industry. But all the recent federal steel programs are doomed to failure because they are piecemeal responses to crises of the moment. Since political leaders hold fast to the idea that the steel industry must compete in a free marketplace, they propose only limited intervention. Their programs attack one aspect of the industry's problems without addressing the others. As a result, they cost the government a lot of money, but don't enable U.S. steelmakers to become world class.

If the steel industry is to survive as more than a shell of its former self, there is only one solution: a comprehensive strategy that coordinates a series of remedial programs.

The Demand Side

A comprehensive program for the steel industry should begin with the demand side. Demand for American steel fell from 100 million tons shipped in 1979 to only 74 million tons in 1984, a 26 percent decline. Without a rebound, domestic steelmakers will have no incentive to modernize.

The decline in steel sales was caused partly by a rise in imports, to more than 25 percent of the U.S. market in 1984. But that was only one part of the story. Equally important was the sharp rise in imports of cars, tractors, subway cars, buses, machine tools, etc. Steel-containing imports reduced the demand for American steel by 13.7 million tons per year in 1985, according to a study by Locker/Abrecht Associates.

A third part of the story was declining exports. The U.S. lost almost six million tons of steel exports in the years 1970-83 because of the overvalued dollar and slumping Third World economic growth. When overseas sales of Caterpillar tractors or Harvester trucks decline, so does demand for American steel.

This article is adapted from *Rusted Dreams: Hard Times in a Steel Community*, to be published by McGraw-Hill Books in February 1987.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A comprehensive program should bring down the value of the dollar, restrict imports, rebuild America's aging physical facilities, support research in product innovation, and transfer capital spending from military to domestic uses.

THE SHARP DECLINE IN DEMAND for American steel during the years 1979-84 was partly the result of the strong dollar. From 1980 to 1983 the dollar's value increased 82 percent against the French franc, 78 percent against the Italian lira, and 41 percent against the West German mark. The dollar's new strength had a clear effect on U.S. competitiveness, according to a Data Resource Inc. study: "German labor compensation costs have moved from about 25 percent above U.S. costs in 1980 to about 20 percent below U.S. costs in 1982." This means that an American mill producing steel 25 percent cheaper than a German mill in 1980 might very well have lost orders to that rival in 1984, even if the domestic facility were more efficient. If U.S. manufacturing industries are to survive, the federal government will have to give priority to keeping the dollar stable and realistically aligned with currencies of our chief trading partners.

EVEN IF THE DOLLAR STABILIZES at realistic levels, the government will probably have to impose strong trade restraints to ensure that the demand for American steel is sufficient to induce domestic producers to modernize.

Protectionism is a dirty word in American discourse. Yet the reality is that "free trade" hardly exists anywhere in the world today. Even the United States, bastion of free trade ideology, manages trade in many economic sectors. The prosperity of the American auto industry in 1983-4 was based on Japan's voluntary agreement to limit exports to this country.

But America's sins against free trade are minor compared to those of our trade partners. Wolfgang Hager, economic consultant to the Common Market, estimates that 75 percent of the free world's trade is subject to quotas, export subsidies, barter arrangements, and other government restrictions. The growth of Third-World industry has made the need for protection more urgent. During the past decade, multinational corporations have built modern manufacturing plants in the poor regions of the world. At the same time, governments around the globe have been promoting basic manufacturing industries like steel, auto, and electronics. The result is enormous overcapacity, and competitive pressure to cut taxes and to lower wages.

Some Americans who accept the necessity of protecting our industries from competition by subsidized Japanese or European producers believe that nothing can or should be done about competition from countries like Korea, Mexico, or Brazil. Now that these rivals have combined modern technology with low labor costs, the argument goes, there's no way U.S. manufacturers can compete with them.

SUCH THINKING RESTS ON QUESTIONABLE assumptions. South Korean and Brazilian mills do have modern technology, but their productivity still lags far behind that of U.S. mills. The difference can be seen in these statistics: American mills use 3.6 man hours to make a ton of hot rolled band steel, while Korean mills need 5.5 hours and Brazilian mills 5.9. The reason is primarily that American steelworkers are more experienced and knowledgeable in the art of steelmaking.

Third-World steelmakers do have one important advantage over U.S. manufacturers: low wage rates. In most of the Third World, severe political repression enables export-oriented producers to keep workers' wages so low that they can never hope to buy the things they produce. Machine guns and police spies provide the foundation of the "labor cost advantage" that is eliminating the jobs of steelworkers in Southeast Chicago.

But isn't protectionism unfair to the poor workers of the Third World? This question is more complicated than it seems. There is evidence that export-platforms like Korea's steel mills and Mexico's auto parts plants, financed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, are not unmixed blessings for their local economies. They draw people off the farms and make for slums in the cities, yet don't seem to generate the kind of self-sustaining economic growth that creates steadily improving living standards. Encouraging the export of Third-World manufactured goods to the U.S. may be a way of helping to ease the international debt crisis, but it's disastrous for U.S. steelworkers, and of dubious benefit to the poor of the Third World.

TO PROTECT U.S. STEELWORKERS without making the workers of the Third World carry the burden, the U.S. should enact an import tax based on the differential between what American workers need to live decently and what Third World workers are paid. The taxes collected could be used for two purposes—to modernize American steel mills and to fund Third World development projects. This would provide an incentive for countries like South

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Korea to develop home markets. They would have a choice of paying the tax or raising their workers' wages, thereby generating domestic demand. This would help U.S. steelworkers one way or the other, and might give workers in the developing world a shot at jobs that are not completely dependent on the vicissitudes of America's economy.

Most Americans are not likely to welcome permanent import restraints. We instinctively believe they will foster inefficiency and will cost consumers billions. The example of Great Britain's nationalized and protected steel industry—whose losses were subsidized for thirty years, with the mills becoming more and more backward—is what we think of first. But it doesn't have to be that way. Japan's protected steel and auto industries have outstripped our own; there's no reason why a protected American steel industry couldn't be modern and efficient too.

But protection will have to extend beyond the steel industry. It would not make much sense to exclude foreign steel if we allowed foreign manufacturers to flood U.S. markets with products containing a great proportion of steel. To do so would leave American steel mills without markets. A program to protect steel only makes sense as part of a larger policy to protect American manufacturing.

At the same time that our government limits competition from abroad, it must also increase domestic demand. One of the most dramatic opportunities to expand demand for steel would be a program to rebuild our infrastructure.

Since 1965, America's investment in public infrastructure has dropped 50 percent. Decaying roads, bridges, and railroad tracks increase transportation costs and energy consumption and decrease productivity. In October 1983, Clifford Garvin of Exxon and Lane Kirkland of the AFL-CIO released a report estimating that in the years 1983-1995 the cost of rebuilding America's highways and bridges, urban water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities would exceed planned spending by $8.5 billion to $10.8 billion *annually*. If to this we add America's deteriorated local roads, railroad beds, and urban mass transit systems, we end up with even larger shortfalls. A

Is It Worth the Trouble?

Q. *Why undertake the herculean task of saving America's steel industry? Why not get on with the task of building up America's high-tech sector, so that there will be new, decent-paying jobs for displaced steelworkers?*

A. Steel is an integral part of our industrial economy, an essential component in manufactured products. The collapse of American steel would leave other domestic producers dependent on foreign suppliers—not of a raw material, but of a capital-intensive, manufactured good. Furthermore, steelmakers are key customers for machine tool and engineering companies. Steel's decline would weaken these industries, which are essential for all manufacturing. If steel goes, it will hasten the downfall of producers of automobiles and trucks, machine tools and consumer appliances, agricultural implements and construction equipment. What is at stake is not simply steel but the entire industrial economy, and that means millions of decent-paying jobs.

Once these manufacturing jobs are lost, they will not be replaced by decent paying jobs in the high tech and service sectors. Despite all the hype about high tech, this sector employs surprisingly few people with specialized skills or advanced educations. There are more assembly and data entry jobs in high tech, but these are highly routinized, and subject to transfer to off-shore low-wage havens.

Furthermore, steel mills and auto plants are major customers for computer makers and robot manufacturers. If America's manufacturing sector continues to decline, what kind of future can domestic high-tech firms anticipate?

Though we cannot count on high-tech employment to replace lost industrial jobs, the service sector is a different story; in the 1970s about 90 percent of the new jobs were of this type. Unfortunately, service workers earned less than two-thirds the wage levels of production workers. Looking to the future, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that of the ten occupations expected to experience most rapid job growth, seven are in the low-skilled service sector, including nurse's aide, security guard, orderly, sales clerk, and food worker.

One might argue that labor should make its stand in the services industry, instead of futilely trying to preserve the dying manufacturing sector. If unionized steelworkers could raise their wages from near-poverty to decent levels, why not service workers? There is something to this argument, but there's also a political problem: if the highly organized manufacturing sector continues to decline, labor won't be strong enough to overcome employer resistance to unionization in health care and sales.

Those who are writing off steel and other manufacturing industries should think hard about what sort of nation America is becoming.

—D.B. AND R.L. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thorough going rebuilding program would generate demand for more than 10 million tons of steel per year, according to the Midwest Center for Labor Research.

If America initiated an infrastructure rebuilding program without enforcing trade restraints, the orders generated by the program would be filled by foreign steelmakers. And if we instituted trade restraints when the dollar was overvalued, the price disparities between domestic and foreign steel would eventually topple the import barriers. Only coordinated action to ensure high levels of steel consumption would minimize the program's costs and maximize its effectiveness.

Investment in Modernizing Steel

INCREASED DEMAND FOR AMERICAN STEEL must be linked to a program to make sure that the steel companies modernize. Stimulating investment in steel will require governmental action because the American economy discourages long-term investment in manufacturing industry.

In recent years, America's financiers and corporate executives have developed means of making profits largely unrelated to social purposes. In the new system of what Seymour Melman has termed "profits without production," financial expertise seems more important than production.

Government tax policies and a revolution in banking practices have encouraged a corporate flight from productive domestic investment. Robert Kuttner notes that, "at the same time that our government pressures Japanese automakers to restrict exports to the U.S. 'voluntarily,' the U.S. tax code gives Ford tax incentives to shift production from Detroit to the Mexican border." Tax code preferences have other bizarre consequences: they provided U.S. Steel with incentives to shut its mills so that it could take over Marathon Oil.

The current tax overhaul leaves in place many of these incentives. A genuine reform would eliminate the tax incentives for unfriendly mergers, conglomerate takeovers of unrelated businesses, and plant shutdowns.

But tax reform without reform of our credit markets is only half a solution. In the 1960s, banks became aggressive buyers and sellers of money; their search for depositors drove up interest rates—and the steel companies had to pay more to borrow the money needed for modernization.

The transfer of billions of dollars from Western consumers to OPEC accelerated the banking revolution by creating a huge pool of highly mobile capital available for investment in high-yield, short-term instruments. Frenzied buying and selling of new forms of paper drove up interest rates, further increasing the cost of industrial modernization.

The banking revolution and the rise of paper entrepreneurialism should have alerted Federal officials to the need for increased supervision of the banking system, but the opposite occurred. "Deregulation" was the name of the game. In the meantime, new forms of speculation appeared every month; and the gains to society were hard to fathom.

Congress and the Federal Reserve have the power to discourage bank financing of hostile takeovers, excessive foreign investment, and commodity speculation, but they fail to exercise it. (The Federal Reserve Board's move against "junk bond" financing of hostile takeovers is a lonely exception.)

TO STRENGTHEN THE INCENTIVE for private capital to modernize industry, the federal government should use public investment as a lever. Such a strategy could shift billions of dollars of private funds into modernization projects.

Pension funds are one available source of public investment. $700 billion of America's capital lies in pension funds. The private capital markets use this huge pool of public capital to finance corporate takeovers and other forms of "profits without production." But pension fund assets could be used to create jobs and modernize industry; indeed, the Building Trades Department of the AFL-CIO already has developed a program to funnel pension funds into the mortgage market to stimulate construction activity.

The military budget is a second potential source of funds for leverage on private capital. Currently, federal defense spending harms American industry rather than helping it. Cost-plus Pentagon contracts have diverted manufacturers from efficient practices, thereby rendering them unable to compete with foreign producers. Tens of thousands of engineers are taken out of civilian employment to work on military production. National spending on research and development is skewed to defense.

If America cut back its military budget by just 10 percent, the savings would reach nearly $30 billion per year. That sum could be used to rebuild basic industry and infrastructure and at the same time leverage greater sums of private capital.

If all these parts of a comprehensive steel program were implemented, the steel industry might be able to make it on its own. But if this program were not implemented in toto, the steel companies would need direct federal subsidies. According to a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

study by the American Iron and Steel Institute, $3-4 billion annually would be required in the absence of a comprehensive program.

Most Americans don't want their tax dollars spent subsidizing firms like U.S.X. and Armco. When they got tax breaks in 1981, they used their windfalls to diversify, not modernize: why give them more money now?

Such suspicions are entirely well-founded. American corporations have a long and sorry history of finding ways to enjoy the benefits of public support while escaping public accountability.

Moreover, this entire program cannot be viewed apart from political realities. Such a massive public investment program is unlikely to be prompted by the decline of our basic industry. American politics is not governed by some benign intelligence that analyzes critical problems and then seeks to address them. It is power, after all, that makes the wheels go round.

The steel companies themselves, blinded by their antipathy to government intervention, are not likely to advocate such a comprehensive program. Pressure must come from other places. The potential coalition for such change remains inchoate. But several important elements have been taking shape in recent years, the most vital being the response from steel communities and steelworkers. It began half a decade ago, with the attempt to organize a worker/community buyout of the shuttered LTV steel mill in Youngstown, Ohio. Then the locus of struggle shifted to the Mononghahela Valley where there have been pitched political battles over issues of worker ownership, eminent domain, and corporate responsibility.

A SECOND PART OF THIS UNFOLDING COALITION has been the United Steelworkers union (USWA). Once highly conventional in its tactics and skittish about "radical elements" and ideas, the USWA has gradually realized that it must fight with every weapon at hand. As a result, the union has begun to show a greater emphasis on technological improvements in its internal communications and its external public relations, as well as a greater willingness to ally itself with worker/community groups arguing for public or worker ownership.

Church groups have also helped to bring strength to this burgeoning coalition.

Fourth, local elected officials have been forced to respond to these forces and have become, however shakily or involuntarily, allies in the search for solutions. Chicago Mayor Harold Washington established a Steel Task Force that has developed a major report on methods to revitalize the region's steel industry. Pittsburgh's Mayor Richard Caliguiri has been required to address such previously unimaginable issues as the public takeover of a steel mill. And even a Republican mayor, George Voinovich of Cleveland, has called for a public jobs program to provide work for the unemployed.

Whether such a loose-knit and geographically spotty confederation can articulate and press for major national policy shifts is difficult to predict. Two things are certain, however. First, if such a movement is to succeed, it cannot focus only on steel, but must have a base in and a program for the manufacturing sector as a whole.

Second, it must have as its centerpiece not just a program of centralized planning of public investment in steel, but an insistence on corporate accountability. Public investment in steel should only be granted in exchange for corporate commitments to modernize old facilities or build new ones.

If such an industrial policy is to be truly democratic, then the terms of the bargain—how much public investment in exchange for how much modernization—should be determined by a process with widespread public participation. Finally, if public agencies invest in the steel industry, they should be given equity stakes, so as to share in the steelmakers' profits.

Saving steel is vital to our national interest. Saving jobs is vital to our economic well-being. But it is only worth undertaking such an uphill battle if it is done with the recognition that this crisis was created by an arrogant industry bloated with power. A revitalized steel industry must be characterized not only by greater efficiency, but by a higher regard for the public interest. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Was the Spanish Civil War "Our Cause"?

Irving Howe

The October 1986 issue of the neoconservative magazine the *New Criterion* carried an article, "Spain and the Intellectuals," by Ronald Radosh, a member of the *Dissent* editorial board. All of us at *Dissent* speak and write as individuals; there is no "party line"; and we accept differences among ourselves as normal. But Radosh's piece is so disturbing that I feel obliged to say a few words about it. His reply to me follows.

The basic thrust of Radosh's piece, if not its explicit or clear conclusion, is to question the political-moral rightness of having supported the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. Long regarded as a clash between an antifascist Republic democratically elected and an insurgent military fascism, the war according to Radosh was actually one between two camps more or less equally repressive and equally guilty of atrocities. As the war continued, writes Radosh, the Spanish Communists and their Soviet masters came increasingly to dominate the Republican side and introduced a terror against leftist dissidents.

Radosh concludes with a polemic against an Englishman who fought in Spain, later came to recognize the destructive role of the Communists, but still "does not regret his own part in the fight." From which Radosh concludes:

> Those brave men who gave their lives [fighting for the Republican side] had allowed themselves to be part of an ideological and propaganda instrument forged by the Comintern [Communist International]. Had they looked closer, they could have discerned the truth at the time. In 1986, those who still respond to the Spanish Civil War as simply "our cause" have no excuse.

The clear implication of all this is that it was wrong or foolish to have supported the Republican side—though by inserting "simply" before "'our cause'" Radosh may be trying to leave himself a way out.*

There were people who did "simply" cheer the Republic, and by now they should know it wasn't all that simple. But there were also liberals and anti-Stalinist leftists who supported the Republican side not at all "simply." They did not lie or romanticize, they knew there were atrocities on both sides (civil wars are brutal), and they denounced publicly the role of the Stalinists in Spain.

Yet the anti-Stalinist left, including the POUM (a Spanish left-socialist party) and the Spanish anarchists, both of whom suffered from the Stalinist repression, still felt that, even as they struggled for civil freedoms within the Republic, it was necessary to support and join the military campaign against Franco.

Why? Because the whole of progressive Spain—the democrats, the unions, the left, most intellectuals—had rallied to the Republic and been inspired by its promise.** Because Franco and his generals represented the growing power of European fas-

*In a passing remark Radosh seems again either to be backing away from the logic of his article or to be uneasy at the thought of facing it. He praises T.S. Eliot for staying "aloof from the foolish chorus of Stalinist hosannas" about Republican Spain, but adds that Eliot was wrong to have opposed lifting the embargo on arms imposed by the Western powers. This seems quite in opposition to the bulk of his article—after all, one can hardly suppose that he took all that trouble just to convince the neocon readers of the *New Criterion* that Stalinism in Spain was bad.

**Years later Octavio Paz, who fought in Spain and has long been a staunch anti-Communist, would write in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* that he had found in Spain "a desperate hopefulness. . . . The memory will never leave me. Anyone who has looked Hope in the face will never forget it. He will search for it wherever he goes."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cism. Because Hitler and Mussolini rushed to Franco's aid.

"Stalin's cynical goal," writes Radosh, "was to steer internal developments in Spain to coincide with the foreign policy objectives of the Soviet Union." To be sure; and Radosh is no more than half a century behind in saying this. But what needs to be stressed is that the Soviet intervention could be effective in good part because of the cynicism and cowardice of the Western democracies, all of which, in the name of neutrality, allowed the antifascist side to go down in defeat.

HAD REPUBLICAN SPAIN WON THE WAR, writes Radosh, "there is little reason to assume that a Communist-dominated Republic would have shown any tolerance for dissent or even led to a subsiding of brutal internal terror." This takes for granted what cannot be demonstrated: that a Republican victory would necessarily have meant Communist domination. But the great majority of Spanish Republicans were not Communists and once the fascist threat had been removed and thereby the need for military aid from the Soviet Union lessened, democratically minded Spaniards might well have been able to reassert themselves.

Can we be certain? No. What we do know, and what they certainly knew then, is that a Franco victory meant decades of fascism and an opening to world war.

Radosh's argument has its implications. You might say—some people did—that it was hardly worth the trouble to defeat Hitler in the Second World War since one result would be Stalinist domination of large parts of Europe. That did in fact happen, but it was not sufficient reason not to work for the military defeat of the Nazis. Or you might argue—does Radosh?—that it is wrong or futile to support the struggle for black liberation in South Africa since it could lead to Communist domination. That is a possibility, of course. It is a risk which in the modern world besets any struggle against fascism or military dictatorship. But that's no reason to decide that black liberation in South Africa isn't "our cause." (Without a "simply.")

Radosh criticizes those who cite Orwell's statement "that there was much he did not understand and did not even like about revolutionary Barcelona, yet 'I recognized it immediately as a state of affairs worth fighting for.'" But this, notes Radosh, was written early in the Spanish war; later Orwell exposed "the new reality" of Stalinist terror in Spain. So he did. But Orwell continued to believe that the Spanish Republic, with all its faults and failures, was "worth fighting for." Here he writes in 1942:

> When one thinks of the cruelty, squalor, and futility of war—and in this particular case of the intrigues, the persecutions, the lies and the misunderstandings—there is always the temptation to say: "One side is as bad as the other. I am neutral." In practice, however, one cannot be neutral, and there is hardly such a thing as a war in which it makes no difference who wins. Nearly always one side stands more or less for progress, the other side for reaction. The hatred which the Spanish Republic excited in millionaires, dukes, cardinals, play-boys, Blimps and what not would in itself be enough to show how the land lay. In essence it was a class war. If it had been won, the cause of the common people everywhere would have been strengthened.

That is why we "still respond to the Spanish Civil War as . . .'our cause,'" though neither now nor then "simply" so. In this century nothing is "simply"—except perhaps a certain kind of anti-Communism which in its intellectual style too closely resembles that which it opposes. □

After-Tax Gap Widens

The gap in after-tax income between the richest 20 percent of American households and the rest of the nation hit its widest point in 1984, according to an analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities of the Census Bureau's after-tax income data for 1984.

The top fifth of U.S. households received 42.3 percent of all after-tax income in the country in 1984. This is the highest level recorded since the Census Bureau began collecting these data in 1980.

The top fifth's gain from 1983 to 1984 came largely at the expense of middle-income households. The middle fifth of all U.S. households received 17.2 percent of the national income in 1984, the lowest level that has been recorded for this group. The next-to-the-bottom fifth received 11 percent, also a new low.

The poorest fifth of all households received 4.7 percent of the national income in 1984, the same level as in the previous year but lower than in 1980.

The Census data show that since 1980, the share of national after-tax income has dropped for households in every income fifth *except for those in the top 20 percent*. While after-tax household income grew between 1983 and 1984, typical black, Hispanic, and female-headed households still had less after-tax income than in 1980. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ronald Radosh Replies

In my original article I had written that Spain remains for most intellectuals on the left "a cause to be reaffirmed rather than investigated." Irving Howe's extraordinary attack on me confirms this assessment. Rather than dispassionately addressing the historical issues, Howe seems intent on confronting me with a political gut check: Which side are you on? What else could account for his misrepresentation of my article as an argument against Republican Spain? In fact, I clearly stated that I thought the Western embargo should have been lifted and that "the main threat to the world in the Thirties was that of . . . aggressive Hitlerism."

Howe thinks it foolish to acknowledge that both camps were "equally repressive and equally guilty of atrocities." Simone Weil thought otherwise. She came to Spain to support a revolution "of starving peasants against landed proprietors and a clergy in league with them," but concluded that the tactics of the left—including those of the anarchists—made them no better than the Fascist enemy. Their indiscriminate violence obscured "the very purposes of the struggle."

Does Irving Howe—once the leading American spokesman for a democratic socialism—really need to be reminded of the connection between political means and ends? Apparently yes. Howe counters Weil's pessimism with a quote from Octavio Paz, who fought for the Republic and later wrote that he had found "hopefulness" in Spain. But this was an early view that Paz later changed in the light of events. In his most recent book he applies the lessons he has learned from the past to the present Central American conflicts (which are the hidden source of the emotions in this whole debate). Turning to El Salvador he writes that "the terrorism of the military and of the ultraright is repeated, mirror-fashion, in the terrorism of the guerrillas." Paz then invokes the same Simone Weil to refute leftist apologists for the guerrillas who claim that similar acts committed in Spain were not regarded as a "blot on the Republican cause." Indeed, he writes, Republican practices revealed that "a similar atmosphere reigned in both camps." The ends we seek, Paz reminds the left, "however lofty they may be, cannot be separated from the means we employ."

For Howe, Franco's ends seem to justify the left's means: "Franco and his generals represented the growing power of European fascism," writes Howe, and their victory meant "an opening to world war." This is exactly the view held at the time by the "premature anti-fascists" of the left (whose "anti-fascism," be it remembered, previously directed at social democrats, had resulted in bringing Hitler to power). Unfortunately, history has been unkind to the illusions that Howe wants to revive. Stalin's subsequent alliance with Hitler, Franco's neutrality in the war, and Spain's gradual liberalization and eventual evolution into a democracy administered by Socialists has made the old myths comforting only to diehards.

For those willing to confront the historical facts, the news can only be disquieting. Consider H.R. Trevor-Roper's suggestion in the *New York Review of Books* that Hitler's chances of achieving victory in the war might well have been strengthened had the Spanish Republic controlled by Stalin won. Friendly to Hitler and hostile to the West, Stalin might have provided the Germans with the transit through Spain that Franco refused, allowing them to cut off Britain's vital access to the Mediterranean.

Franco, moreover, turned to Britain and not Germany for economic aid, and he refused to enter the war on Hitler's side, which Hugh Thomas calls a "remarkable achievement." The Republic's error was not that it took military aid from Moscow, but that it allowed the Soviets to take over the Republic. Franco took aid from Hitler, but in contrast, only gave the Germans mining rights. No wonder that Maurin, founder of the Worker-Peasant Bloc, wrote twenty-five years after the war that "from the moment in which the alternative was posed . . . between the Communist Party, at the orders of Moscow, and the opposing military regime, reactionary but Spanish, the conclusion of the Civil War was predetermined."

But the most bitter commentary on the double standards of commentators on the left, like Howe, was made by Leszek Kolakowski. Kolakowski had been the leading intellectual figure of Poland's first abortive attempt to gain a fraction of the freedom that Spain and its working classes eventually came to enjoy. His remarks appeared, appropriately, in an anthology titled *1984 Revisited*, edited by Irving Howe:

> Let us give rein to our fantasy and imagine a day when the Soviet political system is roughly similar to that of Spain in the last ten years of Franco's rule.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This would be hailed by enlightened and liberal opinion of the West as the greatest triumph of democracy since Pericles and would ultimately prove the infinite superiority of the "Socialist democracy" over the bourgeois order.

Howe avoids such perplexities by contending that a Republican victory would not have meant Communist domination. This is the most crucial of his arguments. It is also the weakest. After 1936, the Communists dominated the Defense Ministry, the police, the propaganda, and the foreign policy of Spain. The meaning of this was succinctly explained by the very symbol of the "good fight," La Pasionaria, Dolores Ibarruri. Speaking in 1947 from Soviet Russia, which had become her adopted nation, she said: "Spain was the first example of a 'people's democracy.'" And so it was. From Stettin on the Baltic to Trieste on the Adriatic, the Communists had begun creating a series of "People's Democracies," exploiting left-wing coalitions and Soviet "aid" in a pattern similar to the tactics first developed in Republican Spain, and resulting in Communist police states totally dominated by the Soviet Union. What in these sordid histories provides Irving Howe with any basis for supposing that the path of Spain would have been different?

And this, ultimately, is why Spain is so important: because it shows what happens to revolutionary causes that ally themselves with the Communists and are dependent on their Soviet patron. The lesson of Spain is a lesson for Central America and South Africa too. "Do you support black liberation in South Africa?" Howe asks me accusingly. To speak of "liberation" in this way, without specifying agencies or agendas, is to debase the political language in exactly the way Irving Howe once condemned the New Left for doing during the Vietnam War. In that struggle Howe took a stance on the left that required immense political courage, refusing to support the demonstrations and movements that promoted Hanoi- and NLF-defined "liberation" for Vietnam. He did so because past history permitted only one conclusion: Communist "liberation" meant horrible oppression for the very people it pretended to serve.

Howe argues that black liberation, supposedly a different case, is unreservedly our cause. Does he go along with Winnie Mandela's statement that "with our matches and our necklaces we will liberate South Africa," in which she heralds the barbarism of the "comrades" in the ghettoes as her own program? Recently, Conor Cruise O'Brien has pointed out how the African National Congress Leninists at the universities seek "rigid ideological control, by people like themselves, both now and after apartheid is gone." Rejecting their demands that he not teach in South Africa, O'Brien holds aloft the standard of democracy against the program of what "some on the left want to urge upon the society as a whole." Does Howe join him in that plea—or does he persist in simply supporting the struggle for liberation without reservations?

For over a decade, the New Left denounced Howe as a traitor to the cause of Vietnamese liberation. But when Vietnam was actually liberated by a coalition controlled by the Communists and supplied by the Soviets, Howe was vindicated. More Indochinese were killed in the first three years of the Communist "liberations" of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, than on all sides in the thirteen years of the Vietnam War. And true to their record in the past, the Communists crushed not only their enemies, but all their partners in the liberation struggle as well.

This is what liberation under Communist auspices means, whether in Spain, or Poland, or Vietnam, or South Africa, or Central America. And this is what concerns those of us on the left who have not surrendered our memories of the past to the political opportunism of the present. Like Octavio Paz. A chastened veteran of Spain, Paz turns today to Nicaragua where in his words "a popular uprising, . . . national in scope," was taken over by "an elite of revolutionary cadres" whose aim was to set up "a bureauacratic-military dictatorship modeled on the one in Havana." The Sandinista elite has created a "regime that is transforming itself day by day, before our very eyes, into a Communist dictatorship." Paz rejects what he calls the "simplistic nonsense" spoken by supporters of the Sandinistas, nonsense that apparently is wisdom to a majority of the editors of *Dissent*.

One would like to think, were he alive today, that George Orwell would have looked over the experience of revolutionary regimes, and, like Paz, rejected the attitude of those whose arguments are "no different from that of the Stalinists of thirty years ago." One always thought Irving Howe had been among those who rejected such logic. Yet it has surfaced inexplicably, but unmistakably, in his insistence on loyalty to a discredited past.

Irving Howe Adds

For my part, the cause of Republican Spain, which even in the late 1930s my friends and I knew to be alloyed, is not "discredited." What do our readers think? □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Paul Berman

The Anti-Imperialism of Fools

The following remarks were delivered at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City in April 1986, at the panel on "Israel and the U.S. Left." The participants were Noam Chomsky, Ellen Willis of the Village Voice, *and myself.* —P. B.

The Middle East scholar Bernard Lewis recently contributed to the *New York Review of Books* some comments on what he calls "The New Anti-Semitism." I have discussed his comments in the *Voice* and wish to expand and elaborate on those points here.

We must ask ourselves: why is it that Israel arouses, around the world, such ferocious hostility?

Is it because Israel has been engaged in a very nasty border dispute with its neighbors, which has gone on for a long time and in which its own actions have frequently been reprehensible? The description is true. But in what way does the nastiness of the dispute and the reprehensibility of the behavior differ from what we see in other disputes, for instance between Greece and Turkey, Iran and Iraq, India and Pakistan, China and Vietnam—all of these being controversies that, though bloody and horrendous, have failed to arouse global passions?

Does the hostility with which Israel is regarded stem from the fact that Israel is a white settler colony intruding itself into the Third World? To describe Israel in that manner would be a cruel way to describe the fleeing remnant of European Jewry. But even if the description were apt, we may note that it long ago ceased to apply. The majority of the Jewish population in Israel is itself from the Third World, above all from North Africa, where it was, indeed, in many cases the original, pre-Arab population.

Perhaps the hostility to Israel arises from its trade with South Africa. I will cite Jesse Jackson on this question, from the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Jackson forcefully condemns Israel for its South African trade—as all of us do here. "But," he adds, "you always have to put the issues in the broader context." The broader context that he notes is that the United States plays a larger role in South Africa than does Israel. "And the other Western democratic allies—Japan, West Germany, and the like—are involved. So I'm not sure," says Jackson, "that it is healthy just to isolate Israel in that sense."

Perhaps hostility to Israel arises from Israel's international arms trade—an ugly arms trade, nobody will deny, one that all of us condemn. But Israel's exceptional status in having such an arms trade is difficult to see. I quote from the North American Congress on Latin America's *Report on the Americas*, May-June 1985:

> The largest arms suppliers to the Third World are the "Big Six"—the US, the USSR, France, Italy, Great Britain and West Germany who between them account for 88 percent of all arms sales to the Third World. Some distance behind are the smaller Western arms exporters: Norway, the Netherlands, Brazil, Israel, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland and Spain.

Somehow we hear about the Israeli arms trade with much greater frequency than we hear about the odious Belgian and Brazilian arming of Guatemala.

Perhaps hostility to Israel arises from the way it discriminates against Arab citizens within its borders and noncitizens in the occupied zones. We here, at this socialist conference, condemn this practice. But it's not hard to go around the world finding instances of abominable treatment of minority populations—the Bulgarian treatment of Islamic Turks, the Berber practice in modern Mauritania of maintaining black slavery—which are grotesque, horrifying, and which to be sure we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oppose, but which somehow have not become objects of worldwide obloquy. Not to mention the traditional Arab treatment of Jews.

Perhaps the hostility arises from the fact that Israel has displaced a large number of people. It is true that for decades the numbers of Arab refugees from Israel, and Jewish refugees from Arab countries, were roughly equivalent. But leaving that aside, the fact remains that mass displacement is a general characteristic of the modern situation, as we see in Africa, in Afghanistan, and in the fate of the Crimean Tartars. Israel's uniqueness can hardly lie in the fact that it has displaced people.

THE INTRACTABILITY OF THE PALESTINIAN refugee problem—perhaps that is the reason. I quote Bernard Lewis: "The intractability of the refugee problem [in Palestine] is a consequence, not a cause, of the political problem. That the problem was not solved, like others elsewhere in our brutal century, by a combination of resettlement and some repatriation, was owing to an act of will on the part of the Palestinian leadership and of the Arab states."

Perhaps hostility to Israel arises from the fact, as is sometimes suggested, that we expected of the Jewish state a higher standard, something greater than grubby injustice and realpolitik. But surely we did not expect from Israel more than was expected, by many people, of Communist China. Yet disappointment in China has not led to unusual worldwide hostility.

Israel's pariah status is such that even now its neighbors have with one exception refused to recognize it—a refusal that does not date from the formation of the PLO in 1964, but from the formation of Israel in 1948. The refusal is absolute, as if Israel were loathsome beyond human tolerance, and as if this loathsomeness were evident to all observers. The horror with which Israel is regarded extends even to certain sectors of the supposedly enlightened left. No one can be unaware of the special tension, the extra electricity, that enters discussion within these sectors when Israel is mentioned. The ferocity has become so great that certain of the more passionate left-wing anti-Zionist intellectuals and groups have flung themselves into bizarre alliances with the extreme right.

In suggesting an explanation for this phenomenon, I wish to point out a peculiar quality that has long pertained to the hatred of Jews. We think of Jew-hating as a dark, reactionary thing cultivated by retrograde unenlightened people, a sentiment for dim intelligences in dark rooms. In fact, anti-Semitism has characteristically taken a form that views itself and is viewed by some people as enlightened. The sun shines, for all that it may surprise us, on anti-Semitism.

The very word "anti-Semitism," as Lewis points out, expresses that fact. The traditional hatred of Jews in Europe was religious. But beginning in the nineteenth century, people with enlightened opinions saw religious bigotry as backward and objectionable. They repudiated it. And those enlightened thinkers who nonetheless persisted in strong feelings about Jews embraced instead a modern, secular sort of hostility based on racial theory, which was the last word in nineteenth-century science. They coined the word "anti-Semitism" precisely to connote the racial, i.e. scientific basis for their hatred of Jews. They were forward-thinking and well-educated, these nineteenth-century anti-Semites. They would never have considered themselves retrograde or reactionary.

AND TODAY, LET US ASK, how do the fierce opponents of Israel, the people who single Israel out for special venom, the anti-Zionists, regard themselves? People with enlightened views today look on anti-Semitic racial hatred as backward and objectionable. They repudiate it. Instead they embrace a modern, secular sort of hostility that is based on political theory, the last word in late twentieth-century thought. They style themselves anti-Zionists precisely to connote the political, i.e. enlightened basis for their strong feelings. They are forward-thinking and well-educated, these anti-Zionists. They would never in a million years consider themselves retrograde or reactionary. But still they bear an inflamed and disproportionate hatred for the one among the world's many sinning states.

A law of anti-Semitic history corresponds to this seemingly progressive aspect. According to this law, what the anti-Semite felt yesterday, he accuses the object of his hatred of feeling today, thus always assuring himself of the modernity and progressiveness of his own ideas. Traditionally, anti-Semites harbored a medieval religious hatred. When that was abandoned by sophisticated thinkers in the nineteenth century, it was the Jews who were accused of harboring a medieval religion. Anti-Semites took up racism, thinking that racism was scientific. When that was abandoned, it was the Jews who were accused of racial hatred. Fifty years ago, sentiment among Arab nationalists leaned toward Hitler. Then Hitler was repudiated, and it was the Jews who were described as Hitler's heirs. When the Arab world was strictly reactionary, Israel was declared a force for Bolshevism. Now that a good many Arabs have gone Marxist-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Leninist themselves, Israel is declared a seat of world reaction. Thus at each stage of anti-Semitism's development, the anti-Semite can congratulate himself on the "progressive" aspect of his views. And this potential for self-congratulation is precisely the mechanism by which the anti-Semite fails to recognize himself as someone in the grip of an obsession.

SARTRE DEFINED ANTI-SEMITISM as a passion which precedes the causes or provocations that are said to give it rise. This passion is the conviction that the Jew is hateful in his essence, not just in particulars. That is why the convinced anti-Semite cannot be converted by mere refutation of his specific beliefs. If one reason for hatred is found wanting, he will jump to another. In truth he will never find any reason wanting. If the anti-Semite says, the Jews are avaricious, the levelheaded person—the democrat, Sartre calls him—will reply, but I know many Christians who are also avaricious. And the anti-Semite will respond: maybe so, but Jewish avarice is different.

And this is, fundamentally, the reply given to any argument that Israel is merely ordinary. If you say, many countries deal in arms, the anti-Zionist will say, yes, but the Israeli arms trade is different. Many countries trade with South Africa. Yes, but the Israeli trade is different. And the argument turns into nonsense.

The most important remark about anti-Semitism made in the Marxist tradition is August Bebel's phrase, "Anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools." It's worth recalling what he meant. Bebel was addressing the nineteenth-century workers' movement and its tendency to rail against Jewish bankers. His purpose wasn't to defend the Jewish bankers, who were as bad as any banker. But he saw that the workers who focused on Jews were pinning the troubles of the working class on a visible scapegoat, instead of on the economic system as a whole. Anti-Semitism in the workers' movement did contain, in its singling out of some capitalists, a sort of social analysis. But it was a stupid analysis. It showed no understanding of how society actually functions. It was the socialism of fools.

And today? Around the world anti-imperialists confront stupendously complex foes and difficulties, and around the world are anti-imperialists who propose a stupendously simple social analysis. Their social analysis rails against one of the world's smallest countries. Stand up to denounce the perfidious policies of this small country, and partisans of the simple view will cheer everywhere with the characteristic ferocity, blithely unaware of how neatly they have fallen into the pattern noted ninety years ago by Bebel. For in the modern world, in parts of the modern left, let us acknowledge, even here, in certain of the enlightened realms of sophisticated New York, anti-Zionism has become the anti-imperialism of fools.

We in the American left sometimes think of ourselves as lacking in power or influence. But that is not the case. Attitudes generated within our ranks have a way of filtering around the world. Let us take seriously, then, our own struggle against anti-Zionism. We should devote ourselves to this struggle because anti-Zionism has become a novel, seemingly progressive form of blindness, a modern mystification on a world scale. We should devote ourselves because anti-Zionism has been harmful unfairly to the people of Israel, therefore has helped cause deformations of Israeli society that no one at a socialist meeting will wish to deny.

WE SHOULD DEVOTE OURSELVES above all because, in the modern circumstance where Jews of the Middle East are no longer defenseless, the ultimate victims of the anti-Zionist passion have become the Palestinians. For the anti-Zionist deep beliefs—the belief that anti-Zionism is anti-imperialism, therefore is part of the world-historical movement of the oppressed, therefore has the force of historical inevitability; the belief that Israel is so revolting to gaze upon that finally all will turn against it and destroy it and therefore again Palestinian anti-Zionism will ultimately triumph; the belief that Israel is somehow different from all other countries and therefore should not be accepted as a fact like other facts—these beliefs, the core of anti-Zionism, have mesmerized the oppressed Palestinians into their tragic version of defeatism, defeatism as a maximalist position, defeatism that becomes more extreme with every new era of the struggle against Israel. We should struggle against anti-Zionism because, in allowing people within the ranks of our own American left to participate in the obsession, we ourselves have contributed to the cultivation of illusion and fantasy among the Palestinians.

Anti-Zionism in this country lacks the kind of influence that is reflected in notable political power. But it does not lack a social or intellectual base. There is a base for it on the left, in the universities, in the journals of the left, in the movements that define themselves by Third World ideology. There is perhaps a larger and more popular base for it on the extreme right. Nevertheless American anti-Zionism characteristically regards itself as lonely, isolated, surrounded by enemies, misunderstood, universally assailed, but fortu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nately heroic and brave. This attitude is on one hand nothing but posturing and of no great importance. But it also figures into the bitterness with which anti-Zionists greet their critics. Anyone who has ever stood up to oppose the anti-Zionism of the left or the right can tell you that the reception is normally one of extreme derision, extreme sarcasm, and outrage. Comrades, the extremeness in these reactions is the problem. □

Linda A. Rabben

The Virtuous Man and the Hollow Man

In 1937 George Orwell went to Spain; in 1980 Christopher Dickey went to Central America. Both set out to write about wars—Orwell to do articles on the Spanish Civil War for left-wing British periodicals, Dickey to do articles on the revolutionary wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala for the *Washington Post*. Both experienced war directly—Orwell as a partisan, Dickey as an observer. Both risked their lives. Both wrote books about their experiences: Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*; Dickey, *With the Contras* (Simon and Schuster, 1986). Orwell's book became a classic; Dickey's has received extremely favorable reviews and may become a classic, too.

But there are some important things that Orwell and Dickey do not have in common. Orwell had strong moral convictions and political views that he set forth in his book; Dickey does not seem to have either—or if he does, he hides them with a care that seems almost perverse. The styles of these two writers differ significantly, and it is through their styles, rather than their reportage, that they reveal their basic dissimilarities as people, as writers, and as exemplars of their eras.

In his introduction to *Homage to Catalonia*, Lionel Trilling called Orwell a virtuous and an honest man. Whether Dickey is virtuous or honest I do not know, since he tries so hard to conceal himself from his readers. I may believe Dickey's facts—indeed, they seem authoritative and unquestionable—but I do not believe in the authenticity of his persona. Orwell, by contrast, seems unimpeachable in every sense, a noble embodiment of his beliefs. I trust him not only as a reporter but as a human being.

Why does one writer impress me so positively and the other leave me so cold? Look at the difference between these two passages:

> I did not make any of the correct political reflections. I never do when things are happening. It seems to be always the case when I get mixed up in war or politics—I am conscious of nothing save physical discomfort and a deep desire for this damned nonsense to be over. (*Homage*)

> "Behind here," Krill said, pulling us to the massive stump of an ancient tree. "Down," he said. Leaves began to fall, severed by bullets clipping a few feet above us. I studied James's face, his eyes darting about us, then looked at the mulch and insects at the base of the tree an inch or so from my eyes, thinking what an asshole I was to be here. (*Contras*)

Orwell admits his frailties with a wonderful lack of self-congratulation, while Dickey often seems to posture for effect. Why does he call himself an asshole, I wondered as I read this passage. Is the word meant merely to shock, or is he trying too hard to impress his readers with his contemptible qualities? If so, why does he want us to judge him so severely? Perhaps for the same reason Orwell acknowledges his limitations: to allow the reader to identify, and thus sympathize, with him. Although it is a privilege to identify with Orwell, a man who risked everything to fight for a cause he believed in, it is much more difficult to glorify Dickey's quest for a story. Dickey fights for nothing during his journey with the *contras* through the jungles of Honduras and Nicaragua: he tags along. He looks on with curiously flat affect, as if the capacity for horror has been drained from him.

> "James," I said in a voice so low it seemed barely to pass my lips, "what the fuck are we going to do if we get hit?"
>
> "Get down," he said, shaking his head.
>
> "I don't think we've got much choice if something happens. I think we've got to do whatever Krill says to do." I had thought about this a long time. We had touched on it before. It seemed, now, incredible that our lives should come down to such utter dependence on this one man, but he had changed so much over the three days of marching that to stay with him, do exactly what he said, seemed not only the only alternative, but also the best.
>
> James nodded. (*Contras*)

Ironically, in his zeal to be "objective," Dickey ends up glorifying the *contras*, apparently against his intention. And he does this through a choppy, Hemingwayesque style that seems all too deliberate and all too dated.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Ten, twenty, thirty—there may have been as many as forty commandos killed by Krill. No one knew for certain. Their stories were lost to confused rumor and unmarked graves. And then there had been Jaguar. And then Cancer. And the camp had broken to bits. And now it was weeks, months later, and Visage had to try to put it all back together again. (*Contras*)

Note the short, punchy words and sentences, the sentence fragment, the redundant "and"s. The tone is macho, laconic, cynical. Dickey alternates such passages with political analysis of Washington's role in the "covert" war, but the energy of the book is concentrated in his eyewitness, anecdotal accounts of the *contras* in action—rough, tough, crazy guys, war is hell, and gimme another drag on that cigarette, compañero. Thus Dickey reduces this war to the level of a docudrama.

In contrast, Orwell invests his prose with moral concerns:

> The last thing I wished for was to be mixed up in some meaningless street-fight. To be marching up the street behind red flags inscribed with elevating slogans, and then to be bumped off from an upper window by some total stranger with a sub-machine gun—that is not my idea of a useful way to die. (*Homage*)

He does this with a careful choice of words: "meaningless," "elevating slogans," "bumped off," "useful." The passage conveys Orwell's love of life, his skepticism, his rationality, his powerful sense of irony, his idealism.

He is not afraid to state his convictions directly as a committed socialist. It is clear that Orwell's beliefs determine the way he writes, while Dickey tries so hard to conceal his opinions and his values that the reader may be left with the impression that he has none. This pose accords with the ideal of journalistic objectivity, but it weakens what he surely means to be an indictment of U.S. policy and actions. (Every review of the book that I have read has assumed that the book *is* an indictment, not mere reportage.)

This slavish "objectivity" undercuts the author's power to move and convince us. Dickey makes himself seem like one of Eliot's hollow men. We have seen this pose often enough, in film noir, in recent novels by male authors (Robert Stone's *A Flag for Sunrise* and many others), and in the deadpan self-display of punk rockers. I think that it embodies a distinctively male retreat from feeling and involvement, and a fascination with violence and cruelty. Many people mistake this self-indulgence for power, and our national leaders play upon this confusion in their rationales for policy.

Orwell is another kind of man; his strength comes from a unique combination of conviction, anger, wry humor, and acute lyrical sensibility.

> I began to feel more normal and to be sorry for the four poor devils who were sweating and slithering with the stretcher on their shoulders. It was a mile and a half to the ambulance, and vile going, over lumpy, slippery tracks. I knew what a sweat it was, having helped to carry a wounded man down a day or two earlier. The leaves of the silver poplars which, in places, fringed our trenches brushed against my face; I thought what a good thing it was to be alive in a world where silver poplars grow. But all the while the pain in my arm was diabolical, making me swear and then try not to swear, because every time I breathed too hard the blood bubbled out of my mouth. (*Homage*)

Nor does he follow the contemporary journalistic prescription, which declares that objectivity is value-free. Orwell takes sides but also tries to tell the truth as best he can:

> And I hope the account I have given is not too misleading. I believe that on such an issue as this no one is or can be completely truthful. It is difficult to be certain about anything except what you have seen with your own eyes, and consciously or unconsciously everyone writes as a partisan. (*Homage*)

And he makes a statement that in Dickey's world would probably be impossible: "Curiously enough the whole experience has left me with not less but more belief in the decency of human beings." It takes courage to maintain such faith in the face of the infamy, betrayal, and brutality that Orwell witnessed in Spain.

In framing his analyses in war-novel rhetoric, Dickey has failed to question—indeed, reinforced—the basic assumptions that lead us into military adventures and wars (what Orwell calls "that pernicious feeling, so difficult to get rid of, that war *is* glorious after all"). Perhaps it is no longer possible to believe in the decency of human beings as Orwell did; after all, we have fifty more years of counter-evidence on a gargantuan scale. But must we meekly surrender, in the name of "realism" and "objectivity," in two-syllable words and one-sentence paragraphs, to what we used to claim to abhor? □

Photo Contest

New Immigrants in New York City
For Special New York Issue of *Dissent*

Send for information.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stanley Crouch

An Opera Based On Malcolm X

When compared to men like Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Malcolm X seems no more than a thorned bud standing in the shadow of sequoias. Given national recognition by television in 1959, Malcolm X was just beginning to realize how empty his platform had been when he was silenced in 1965, shot down in the very same Harlem that he had victimized either materially as a street hustler or intellectually as the loudest mouthpiece for the Nation of Islam. That so few are willing to admit how much more he made of the thorns than the bud that never truly opened, is yet another example of the intellectual dishonesty that has dogged Negro America since too many in positions of influence and responsibility started sipping at the well of a black nationalism.

But misbegotten political programs coming from Negroes haven't been fostered or upheld in isolation; irresponsible whites who think themselves "sympathetic" have also helped fog the horizon. Beverly Sills is the latest culprit. In her position as general director of the New York City Opera, Sills is serving up some buzzard meat incinerated to charcoal, covered with a glistening glop of honey, and calling it pheasant under glass. The name of it is *X (The Life and Times of Malcolm X)*, and it had its world premiere in October. Written by Anthony, Charles, and Thulani Davis, *X* manages to be neither musically creative nor mythically resonant, tragically piercing nor provocatively memorable. What we are given is one of the most ruthlessly dishonest renditions of a historical figure I have ever seen.

It is ironic that we should get from three Afro-Americans the same thing that almost every wing of the black community so often complains of when white historical figures are sentimentalized beyond recognition; when, for instance, ice-hearted killers are remade into gleaming folk heroes or defenders of slavery are presented as sublimely humane and intrepidly democratic. Though they avoid the human and political facts of the matter at every turn, the three unwise Davises apparently think themselves the authors of a heroic tragedy. Composer Anthony Davis says in the program notes:

> I always viewed Malcolm X as a truly heroic figure, and thought that he would make a great subject for an opera. His life was a dramatic odyssey—he went from a destitute childhood to street life to prison. He then educated himself, became a minister, and evolved into a powerful political figure. Malcolm's transformation was such a model. He had been a peer to the man on the street, so he could come back and tell them, "You have to change your life." He taught blacks to help themselves, stirred their racial pride, and gave them hope that they could achieve political and economic power. Although I greatly admired Martin Luther King—I met him when I was a boy—Malcolm's life was just so *dramatic*.

But the opera itself is woefully lacking in drama and is given to the kind of intellectual cowardice that some Negroes justify with terms like "positive black images" and "the need for black heroes." *X* treats its audience as much like children as any slave master ever did; it fails to address adult problems and avoids the terrible murkiness of the human soul at every occasion.

THULANI DAVIS, who wrote the rhymed couplets that in their ineptitude seem embarrassing by comparison with the human illuminations of the blues, suggests a desire for tragedy in her program quote: "We wanted the audience to see the events in Malcolm's life clearly. We want them to be horrified, not crying or upset." Tragedy, however, demands that the doomed hero face his involvement in his fate, that he recognize the merciless consequences resulting from the interplay between his personality and his circumstances. As *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* shows, the man who died at the Audubon Ballroom eleven months after breaking away from the Nation of Islam never really examined the personality flaws that made him so gullible, or so dangerous. As he was disentangling himself from one snarl of misconceptions, Malcolm X was strapping himself into another intellectual and political high chair and was gratefully accepting spoon-fed political baby food from another jar—the simplified, self-serving, and sometimes fascistic notions and platforms of Arab and African politicians and students.

During his celebrated trip to Mecca and to West Africa, Malcolm X was again taken in. He accepted the excuse that any Arab racism toward black Africans was the result of "Western influence," yet another version of the white man as the snake in Eden. This supposedly brilliant man and student of black history never questioned the Arab slave trade or the Islamic conquest of African countries and the destruction of indigenous African culture which Ousmane Sembene took to task in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ceddo; nor did Malcolm X ask whether the numerous racist black images in *A Thousand and One Nights* that clearly parallel the ones he railed against in Hollywood films were perhaps accurately translated by Sir Richard Burton. When African students were contemptuous of democratic debate and willing to assault anyone who disagreed with Malcolm X's speeches, he was incapable of recognizing what he was witnessing—the ruthlessness that has long bedeviled post-colonial African politics. Malcolm X was so overjoyed to be greeted as a celebrity that his purported abilities for hard analysis were put on hold.

EVEN SO, THE DAVISES HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO reach tragedy, to create pathos, to pull the covers off a figure whose psychological and emotional birthday suit was as much that of an elephant man as anything else. He was a man who was constantly misled, both by his ego and by the distortions of one sort or another that he so willingly accepted from others. Malcolm X was given to the cynicism of the parasitic street hustler, of the convict so embittered and atheistic he was nicknamed "Satan" in prison, and of the homemade and racist parody of a theology offered by Elijah Muhammad. He was a man whose bad judgment meant that he eventually had to repudiate his every stage of development, and whose vision, however clever at times, never reached the poetic grandeur he so begrudgingly recognized—as did the vast majority of Negro Americans—in the work and thought of Martin Luther King. So what must be faced about the ambitious man who was Malcolm X, who hoped to go down in history as a significant martyr, is that the bulk of his career was spent passing out intellectual and political blanks. His ideology gave off a loud report but had no chance of hitting a target; for the most part, Malcolm X's notions—save in the confused last eleven months of his life—were defeatist, were a racist program of surrender and smug hopelessness grounded in separatism and the belief that white people were devils incarnate.

Though such observations can easily be gleaned from the *Autobiography*, the Davises, cowardly and cotton-candy militant all, never touch any of the man's human qualities with aesthetic and emotional daring. Instead of a tragedy centered in the parasitic world of the hustler and the nihilism of racist black nationalism (as opposed to reasonable ethnic pride), they settle for a series of cartoon posturings.

By removing the emotional intestines from Malcolm X's life and by avoiding the facts of his career as a hustler and an evangelist for racism, the Davises don't give baritone lead Ben Holt much to really do. His problems with projection are increased by orchestration that too frequently puts a field of instruments in his register as obstacles—perhaps breaking convention, but rather stupidly. Silent in the hustling world of *X*, Holt isn't allowed to change from a country boy into a piranha rising from the mud to show his teeth. He merely puts on different clothes and listens to some chanting celebrants who seem more hipsterish than those who have made wrecks of so many black communities —and whom Malcolm X described with such depth, detail, and disgust. Instead of the prisoner so swollen with hatred and spiritual pollution that he was dubbed "Satan" by his fellow convicts, the Davises give us a caged prophet who pompously says his "truth" is "too rough." (Actually Malcolm X gloried in the status he achieved as a sharp and clever debater who never missed an opportunity to inject race into any discussion.) The man who converted to an Islam based on race hatred and a homemade version of a chosen people doesn't appear either. The insistence that the white man was the devil and the born enemy of black people, that Christianity was no more than a tool used to subvert black consciousness, that the Civil Rights Movement was generaled by boot-licking dupes and cowards, and that separation from an America doomed to fiery destruction by God was the *only* solution to the race problem, never comes from the mouth of this Malcolm X. Nor do the Davises give us any idea of what Malcolm X meant when he told Gordon Parks, "I did many things as a Muslim that I'm sorry for now. I was a zombie then—like all Muslims—I was hypnotized, pointed in a certain direction and told to march. Well, I guess a man's entitled to make a fool of himself if he's ready to pay the cost. It cost me twelve years."

Malcolm X's first descent into despair came when he found out how successfully Elijah Muhammad had converted him into a chump. "I felt like a fool," he told Alex Haley, "out there every day preaching and apparently not knowing what was going on right under my nose, in my own organization, involving the very man I was praising so." Malcolm X was referring to his discovery that the Messenger of Islam was guilty of the paternity charges brought against him by former secretaries. According to Malcolm X, the secretaries not only confirmed all the rumors but informed him that Elijah Muhammad saw his most charismatic minister as a potential threat. Ever the hustler, however, Malcolm X admitted searching for passages in the Bible that would justify the Messenger's high-handed morality if—and when—everything pub-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

licly exploded. When he saw the old man and told him, Muhammad supposedly said that he was only fulfilling prophecy as he impregnated his secretaries, implying that it was his duty to experience sin in order to truly combat it. Are we given this remarkable scene? Is Malcolm X shown as a man desperately trying to maintain his faith in a fraud when the facts point in another direction? Hardly. The libretto only has the sorrowing follower sing to his leader, "I hear things I cannot believe; they say the Messenger has his own law." Such is the flight from dramatic confrontation, from characterization, from the Mississippi nights of the soul.

This is especially unfortunate because the singer Thomas Young was clearly capable of giving much more range and color to the role of Elijah Muhammad. In fact, he is so much more powerful a singer than Holt that he should have had the lead. As a singer and stage presence Priscilla Baskerville is such a sweltering wonder that one cannot understand why the romance between Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz was reduced to no more than symbolic passing. The way she magnetized him is one of the most charming parts of the *Autobiography*. In *X*, his wife and children merely appear, magically, before the trip to Mecca.

The music matches the libretto in superficiality. In the first act, the score poorly approximates some blues grooves, now and then nearly reaching inspiration but settling for second-rate excitement no more authentic than the Motown imitations of *Dream Girls*. Nothing in Afro-American music is digested well enough to express the emotional forces available at least since the spirituals. The second act is an abysmally anonymous encyclopedia of twentieth-century concert music clichés. Again, melody never really rears its lyrical head, except in three or four note snippets and an occasional ascending arpeggio. The music for the Mecca segment is dull and totally lacking in religious intensity. In the last few minutes, when the tension bubbles as the assassination approaches, drama actually arrives—only to be iced by the curtain as the killers stand and take aim.

X is neither about the life and times of Malcolm X nor anything else deserving so much press attention. It is a fumbled opportunity, no more, no less. But then little of tragic merit can be expected from those who took the saber-rattling politics of Malcolm X seriously. Surface bluster and occasional insight is what he had to offer. Still, we should get more from those who pose as artists. □

IN THE MAGAZINES

(Continued from page 112)

America, the problem is not economics but demographics. Changes in family size, the age distribution of family heads, the mix of family types have all been cited as reasons for the decline of the middle class. The most popular demographic argument is that baby boomers flooded the labor market during the last decade, expanding the supply of labor and thereby reducing wages. As the baby-boom generation reaches prime earning age, and as fewer young workers enter the labor force, overall wages will improve, thus increasing the ranks of the middle class. While these analysts do not dispute that the middle class has declined, they believe the problem is self-correcting, and that social policy is not needed to address it. (If this argument seems simplistic it is worth remembering that Nobel Prizes in economics have been won for less.)

Critics have pointed out that the baby boom generation won't disappear as it gets older and that if their large numbers depressed wages when they were younger they will continue to do so when they are older. Bradbury presents a more fundamental criticism of demographic argument. Using data from the Bureau of the Census, Ms. Bradbury demonstrates that "the fraction of families with middle-class incomes declined within virtually all demographic groups, however defined." No matter how we look at families—by size, by region, by type (married couple; wife in labor force or wife not in labor force; female head, no spouse present; male head, no spouse present), or by the age of family head—the percent of families in each group with middle-class incomes declined between 1973 and 1984. The *only* exception is families in which the head is 65 years or older.

Bradbury concludes: "The ultimate sources of the decline in the middle class apparently are not demographic changes." Thanks to this important work we can now focus our attention where it should have been all along—on the changing industrial mix of jobs in the U.S. economy and the regressive spending and tax policies of the Reagan Administration.

MARK LEVINSON □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the Magazines

Christopher Lasch: "What's Wrong with the Right?" *Tikkun,* Volume 1, Number 1 (undated). $5 per issue. Available from the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, 5100 Leona St., Oakland, Calif. 94619.

Lasch argues that the values of tradition, family, and personal responsibility find their defenders today among conservatives, not among the left. But American conservatism has a fatal flaw: it fails to see that it is not some liberal "new class" but capitalism itself that "undermines the values of loyalty and permanence and . . . is destructive of family life." A vital conservatism would have to oppose capitalism and the restless consumerist ethic it generates.

This piece could just as well have been titled "What's Wrong with the Left?"

> It is because conservatives have managed to occupy so much of the ground formerly claimed by the left that they have made themselves an important force in American politics. . . . Conservatism owes its growing strength to its unembarrassed defense of patriotism, ambition, competition, and common sense, long ridiculed by cosmopolitan sophisticates. . . . The left, which until recently has regarded itself as the voice of the "forgotten man," has lost the common touch.

Lasch seems so sour about both left and right that one wonders why he bothers to identify himself with one or the other: he could have written this piece for a conservative journal, since so many of the values he praises are defended primarily by the right. And sure enough, in his closing paragraph he says:

> The hope of a new politics . . . lies in rejecting conventional political categories and redefining the terms of political debate. The idea of a "left" has outlived its historical time and needs to be decently buried, along with the false conservatism that merely clothes an older liberal tradition in conservative rhetoric. The old labels have no meaning anymore.

This sounds dandy and is quite fashionable these days; but where does it get us? In *The Minimal Self,* his most recent book, Lasch offers a new way to look at American politics: he suggests that it's a quarrel among the "party of the ego," the "party of the superego," and the "party of Narcissus." Given the choice between this and the old labels, I'll take the old labels.

Lasch seems to be calling for a political outlook that would combine the best elements of conservative and leftist thought; but he's silent about the question of what kind of social arrangements could fulfill his political vision. I would guess he favors some form of participatory democracy based on local control, but it's hard to be sure. What Lasch dislikes is clear enough, but he never does more than gesture towards the improvements he has in mind. He owes it to us, and to himself, to be more clear.

Lasch is one of the best social critics we have: he's original, and he *is* one of the few people around who are trying to think their way beyond traditional political categories. But in recent years, a troubling strain of dogmatism and abruptness has crept into his work. He tends to get carried away, for instance, with ringing evocations of the value of tradition, without pausing to explore the fact that some traditions are more valuable than others—something that in his better moments he's sensitive to. His attacks on the "cosmopolitan sophisticates" of the left give you a feeling of *déjà vu*—it's almost like reading an old speech of Spiro Agnew's. Lasch should begin to explore the subtleties in his argument, the problems. To lift some lines from Ezra Pound's poem about Walt Whitman: You long ago broke the new wood; now is a time for carving.

BRIAN MORTON

Rosellen Brown: "The Emperor's New Fiction." *Boston Review,* August 1986. Available from 33 Harrison Ave., Boston, Mass. 02111. Sven Bikerts: "The School of Lish." The *New Republic,* October 13, 1986.

Two views of the "new fiction." Novelist Rosellen Brown surveys ten recent books by young

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writers and finds that they have in common a disturbing "reduction in emotional volume" and a withdrawal of concern from the social world. Bikerts makes a similar observation: "What has passed into fiction, whether from Carver, Beattie, or the spirit of the time, is a total refusal of any vision of larger social connection." Shying away from unruliness, daring, and a wide social canvas, the new writers give us a fiction of cautious indirection and restricted settings.

Brown believes that this sort of fiction, which she calls "minimalist," is a reaction to the "unequivocally biased narrative voice" of the fiction and "new journalism" of the 1960s. At first glance, Bikerts seems to lay the blame on one man: Gordon Lish. An influential editor, Lish has acted as a one-man propaganda army for the new fiction. But on rereading the essay one sees that Lish is just a convenient peg for Bikerts to hang more general observations on.

One has to wonder whether these writers aren't making much ado about nothing. The new fiction, at this point, may be less a school of writing than a creation of shrewd p.r. Does the whining monotone of Brett Easton Ellis *(Less than Zero)* really have much in common with the witty romanticism of Jay McInerney *(Bright Lights, Big City)* or the precious sensitivity of David Leavitt *(Family Dancing)*? Ellis's book might be called "minimalist," but only because it isn't saying much. It's hard to see how the others deserve that label. To treat these writers as a school seems premature, to say the least.

It is true that recent American fiction has been marked by a new note of spareness and, perhaps, "affectlessness" (a key word in discussions of this kind). But to attack the new writers seems beside the point. Each generation has to make its way out of the shadow of the one that preceded it. Against Hemingway's cult of reticence, people like Mailer and Bellow asserted themselves with styles of lush complexity; it's only natural that a later generation should rediscover the virtues of reserve. The interesting question is what they'll manage to do with this style—as Hemingway has shown, and, in our own time, Raymond Carver, a lot *can* be done with it. But in the case of the younger writers, it might be wise to wait a decade or two before drawing up accounts.

The *New York Times* reported recently that when twenty-seven-year-old Meg Wolitzer *(Hidden Pictures)* and twenty-five-year-old Leavitt were driving around the Hamptons together, Wolitzer began to muse about what it would mean to the future of American fiction if they died in a crash. (The answer, of course, is that there would cease to *be* such a thing as American fiction if two such titans died before their time.) That a young novelist should be possessed by such wildly inflated self-regard is understandable—it goes with the territory—but that the *Times* should solemnly report on it says something sad about our literary culture today.

To treat these writers as major voices or to go after them with heavy rhetorical artillery: both approaches are rash. We should let them grow.

B. M.

Two documents from *Peace and Democracy News*, Summer/Fall 1986. Available from the Campaign for Peace and Democracy/East and West, PO Box 1640, Cathedral Station, N.Y., N.Y. 10025.

Peace and Democracy News, in existence for two years, is a small newsletter that advocates a politics of the "third way." Opposed to both superpowers, it seeks to bring about friendly relations between the Western left and the democratic and socialist opposition groups in the Soviet Union and its client states.

This issue carries two documents of interest. The first is a statement that appeared as an advertisement last year in the *New York Times* and several other newspapers and magazines: "Independent Voices, East and West, Speak Out Against Reagan's Nicaragua Policy." Arguing that "the nature of the Nicaraguan regime is not the issue," the signers protest the war on Nicaragua as a violation of "the right of every nation to self-determination in complete freedom from superpower control, whether that domination is justified by the Brezhnev doctrine in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan, or by Reagan's claims of U.S. special interests in Central America and the Caribbean."

Among the signers are the usual suspects—Michael Harrington, Noam Chomsky, Mary Kaldor, Carlos Fuentes, Günter Grass. But alongside them is an impressive list of unusual suspects: writers and activists from the USSR and its client states: among them, Jan Jozef Lipski of Poland, one of the founders of KOR; the *samizdat* publisher Laszlo Rajk and the novelist Gyorgy Konrad, both of Hungary; and twelve signers from Czechoslovakia, including eight former or current Charter 77 members.

The second document is an open letter to Daniel Ortega from ten Czech intellectuals, nine of whom

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also signed the statement on Nicaragua. They make plain their opposition to Reagan's war and their support for "the courageous people of Nicaragua." But they go on to express their disquiet about the imposition of a state of emergency last year. The letter is eloquent, so I'll quote from it at length:

> The fight for human dignity and freedom, the fight for social justice and the fight for equal rights of peoples and nations, are one and the same struggle: the emancipatory battles in Eastern Europe and Latin America are part and parcel alike of that struggle. And it is out of our feelings of solidarity [that] we wish to express our grave concern over developments in Nicaragua in the field of human rights and regarding the future of democracy in your country.
>
> The recent declaration of a state of emergency, as a result of which numerous personal liberties and rights, including the right to strike, have been abolished or curtailed, cannot be justified in our view solely in terms of the military incursion by anti-Sandinista units. . . . The counterrevolutionary onslaught will either be defeated by the free supporters of the Revolution or the Revolution will perish. In such a case it does not seem to matter too much if its defeat will be caused by outside intervention or an internal development which negates all the Revolution's ideals and which, with the so-called aim of "saving the Revolution," gradually sets up a bureaucratic dictatorship, a new system of repression and manipulation with empty slogans and full jails. . . .
>
> We protested against American support for the military attacks on your Revolution because we consider that U.S. policy on Nicaragua is detrimental to the cause of human emancipation. But now that we feel that this cause is being seriously jeopardized from within, it is to you that we address our sincere concern.

In its modesty, humaneness, and clarity, this seems a beautiful letter. It bears an uncanny similarity to a letter that Rosa Luxemburg wrote to Lenin after the Russian Revolution, urging him not to suppress dissent. Luxemburg went so far as to suggest that if the revolution could not survive while preserving democratic liberties, it might be preferable for it to be defeated, and live on as an inspiring memory, rather than to survive as a sordid reality.

I don't know if Daniel Ortega ever answered this letter or if the signatories have changed their minds about the Nicaraguan revolution, one way or the other. I myself believe that, though the criticisms made by the Czech intellectuals are just, what is even now remarkable about Nicaragua is that some important avenues of dissent remain open there, despite the enormous pressures of war. But this is to wander from the point. The point is that this letter, and the statement discussed above, are two of the most hopeful documents to appear in a long while.

One of the saddest, screwiest things about this screwed-up world is our habit of believing that the enemy of our enemy is our friend. The Sandinistas fail to condemn the Soviet war against Afghanistan; many Solidarity intellectuals can't see anything wrong with the war on Nicaragua. These two documents suggest that something new may be happening. What E. P. Thompson has called "détente from below" may finally be coming about. Across the East-West divide, opponents of what William Cobbett called "the Thing" are finally beginning to talk to each other—beginning to realize that their struggle is the same.

B.M.

Katharine Bradbury: "The Shrinking Middle Class." ***New England Economic Review*****, September/October 1986. Available from The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Boston, Mass. 02106.**

This article adds to the evidence that the American middle class is declining, and makes a powerful case that the problem is not "self-correcting."

Bradbury defines middle class as family income between $20,000 and $49,999. By this definition about one-half of all families are middle class, about one-third have lower incomes, and the remainder, roughly 15 percent, have higher incomes. As the table shows, the fraction of middle-class families declined between 1973 and 1984 by over 5 percent. Most of those leaving the middle class slid down.

Percent Distribution of Families by Income

	1973	1984	Change
Below $20,000	32.1	36.4	+4.3
$20,000–50,000	53.0	47.9	−5.1
Above $50,000	14.9	15.6	+0.8

The decline in real income for many American families in the last decade is especially disturbing in light of the growth of two-earner families during the same period. While more people in each family are working, the family is worse off than before.

For some who cling to the belief that all is well in

(Continued on page 109)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Lekachman

English Socialists a Generation Ago

NEW JERUSALEMS: THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE ECONOMICS OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM, by Elizabeth Durbin. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 341 pp. 1985. $32.00

For individuals of a certain age and experience, Elizabeth Durbin's sympathetic but clear-headed exploration of the British Labour party's attempt in the 1930s to define a program at once intellectually coherent and politically appealing recalls their own groping for a non-Stalinist, democratic socialist alternative to American capitalism. When as a 1939 Columbia College sophomore I entered the *New Republic* essay contest for undergraduates, the title of my earnest piece was "Toward a Democratic Socialism." It won honorable mention—rather better than socialism has fared in the real world of electoral politics.

One of the riddles our small group tried to resolve was the management of the economy. Stalin had given central planning a bad name. It was a technique difficult if not impossible to reconcile either with political democracy or economic efficiency. The more or less free markets beloved of economists had always generated vast, unmerited inequalities of income and wealth. Still, until the Great Depression, admirers of capitalism could claim with some plausibility that the untrammeled pursuit of profit had fostered economic growth and, despite interruption by recessions and depressions, had vastly improved living standards for workers and their families. We were confident that the seemingly interminable devastation of the 1930s had destroyed capitalism's strongest claim to legitimacy. There was nothing efficient about a system that shuttered factories, bankrupted farmers and businessmen, and laid off millions of men and women.

WAS THERE A THIRD WAY, a more efficient and more equitable alternative to central planning, Soviet style, and Anglo-Saxon anarchic capitalism? We thought so. American democratic socialists took their lead from the theorists of market socialism: Fred Taylor, an American; Oskar Lange, a Pole teaching in the 1930s at the University of Chicago; and a group of Englishmen. Among the latter was the author's father, Evan Durbin, whose life was cut tragically short by drowning. Market socialists quickly embroiled themselves in a wrangle with Ludwig von Mises and the still living Friedrich Hayek. The Austrian duo demonstrated to their own satisfaction the impossibility of designing under socialism markets as sensitive to consumer preferences and as efficient in the allocation of resources as the genuine capitalist article. Durbin and others tended to argue that nationalization of the Bank of England and possibly the major private banks would allow socialists to set investment priorities. Any socialist regime would vastly enlarge the scale of social provision—health care, old age and disability payments, family allowances, and subsidized housing. Market socialists differed endlessly over the scope of nationalization and the governance of nationalized enterprises.

As for the consumer sector, market socialists proved ultimately even to their adversaries that shadow markets could theoretically at least replicate the behavior of private capitalists. What mattered was not the locus of ownership but the operating rules obeyed by the leaders of enterprises. Socialist managers could be instructed to obey the same market signals as guided entrepreneurs. When customers favored their merchandise, it was appropriate to increase prices and orders to wholesalers, jobbers, and manufacturers. Conversely, diminishing sales and accumulating inventories dictated price reductions and shifts to more appealing items.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In principle, market socialism was far more efficient than market capitalism. No monopolies would remain to misallocate resources and extract extortionate profits from helpless customers. State guidance of financial and investment policy was certain to eliminate the hardships inflicted by downswings in the business cycle. Socialist rules of competition would eliminate the deceptive advertising of frivolous or harmful products. More nearly equal distribution of income and wealth would diminish the influence of the wealthy upon the cost and design of consumer goods.

THIS WAS THE STORY I BORROWED IN 1939. Should anyone care in the Reagan era, it remains intellectually valid. In the unlikely event that in the twenty-first century democratic socialists attain power, they have blueprints available to manage the economy. Because Durbin, Hugh Gaitskell, Hugh Dalton, and G.D.H. Cole were economists and, with the exception of Cole, deeply impressed by the Cambridge's and London School of Economics' emphasis upon the power and virtue of competitive markets, the market socialist solution was essential to their peace of mind.

However, the practical politicians who sought power for themselves and the Labour Party badly needed macroeconomic help—rather more than triumphant demonstrations that socialism and efficiency were compatible. No need to trouble one's head about esoteric price theory when mass unemployment afflicted the economy. Clement Attlee and Herbert Morrison as senior leaders of the Labour party had to answer the question: How would they create large numbers of new jobs? Here loomed the imposing intellectual presence John Maynard Keynes.

Democratic socialists did not cast themselves immediately into Keynes's arms. Durbin in particular had questioned the merits of deficit-financed public works as a cure for unemployment. He fretted over inflationary dangers as the economy moved toward high unemployment. Deficits and public works were of course the sovereign Keynesian remedies. As early as his 1929 pamphlet *Can Lloyd George Do It?* in support of Lloyd George, then engaged in an attempted comeback, Keynes had advocated deficit spending on common sense grounds. There were hordes of desperate job seekers and numerous unfilled needs for new schools, hospitals, roads, and other public facilities. It made excellent sense to put the idle to useful work. Keynes's 1933 manifesto *The Means to Prosperity* incorporated the investment multiplier invented by his younger Cambridge colleagues R.F. Kahn and James Meade. The multiplier promised a generous supply of free lunches. A dollar of public investment would be income to its initial recipient, more income to the retailers whose merchandise he bought, still a third increment of income to wholesalers as retailers refilled their shelves, and yet a fourth bit of income to manufacturers whose orders from wholesalers rose. There were leakages along the way. People saved portions of added income. Nevertheless, a dollar's worth of deficit-financed public spending could be counted upon to increase community income at least two or three times that sum, and probably much more.

Keynes had not yet convinced respectable colleagues that economic theory sanctioned governmental meddling into the delicate, self-equilibrating, automatic readjustments of private markets. No doubt these readjustments were occurring more slowly than usual but Lionel Robbins, an influential voice at the London School of Economics, was disposed to blame persistent depression on inflexible wages and prices, and inappropriate budgetary policy. If workers accepted wage cuts, sellers cut prices, and Whitehall balanced the budget, recovery was certain. The influential British Treasury argued that public deficits simply diminished private investment in order to produce an arbitrary list of projects instead of market-directed alternatives.

AS AN ABSTRACT DISCIPLINE, ECONOMICS demands of self-nominated innovators a theoretically coherent framework within which novel policies may be properly sponsored. At the start of 1936, Keynes provided just such a framework in his epochal *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money.* Rudely attacking his teachers, the twin Cambridge icons, Alfred Marshall and A.C. Pigou, Keynes denied that the economy normally operated at full employment and that temporary aberrations from that condition would spontaneously correct themselves. In his demonstration that equilibrium could and frequently did occur when workers and factories were substantially unemployed or underutilized, Keynes invalidated Say's Law, the venerable early nineteenth-century allegation that supply generated its own demand. Incomes paid to workers returned as sales to their employers. The latter had good cause to press output to the limits of available manpower, raw materials, and machines.

But an economy capable of bumping along indefinitely at levels of private investment and consumer expenditure inadequate to employ the entire labor force, urgently needed outside intervention. Enter then, this time with full theoretical justification,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deficit spending. The benign multiplier guaranteed large bangs for new bucks. Here, it might seem, was the answer to a socialist's prayer, a program validated by his generation's most prominent economist, Cambridge's own John Maynard Keynes.

Durbin's new fabians were in close touch with the Keynesians, notably Roy Harrod and James Meade. As Elizabeth Durbin explains in fascinating detail, it was not that easy. Insofar as Keynes had any party affiliation, it was to the Liberals. Moreover, the man had a record of iconoclasm and abrupt shifts of position that disturbed such conventional souls as Durbin. He wrote to Keynes's formerly close coworker Dennis Robertson that "I must register here my belief before I read the book that I do not think that any man really gets back beyond or wholly invalidates a century of scientific thought." Moreover, Keynes had failed to explain the business cycle, convincingly rebut charges that his policies courted inflation, or justify his acceptance of private markets as efficient resource allocators. Durbin and his associates were the politest of revolutionaries.

Even if one in the end adopted Keynesian theory and practice, as most of Durbin's circle, though not Durbin himself, did, Keynes posed a problem of socialist strategy. Enthusiastic embrace of the man threatened to prop up capitalism and indefinitely postpone the date of socialist transformation, a version of the Roosevelt problem across the ocean. My friends excoriated FDR on the ground that the New Deal in the nick of time had defused radical progress toward socialism. In England, where a mildly socialist Labour party stood a realistic chance of forming a government, practical considerations easily triumphed. The policies that the timid Ramsay MacDonald government had feared to adopt lest conventional opinion be outraged could now be incorporated into the socialist arsenal.

As Elizabeth Durbin usefully reminds us, the Labor party was a frequently uneasy alliance of middle-class Oxbridge and public school intellectuals and working-class leaders like Ernest Bevin and Herbert Morrison. The latter, a highly successful London municipal administrator, was uninvolved in theoretical controversy. His focus was upon the administration of the industries to be nationalized by a Labour government, a topic not neglected by the party intellectuals, but not usually at the center of their concerns. Unlike the market socialists, Morrison had no qualms about nationalizing coal mines, railroads, utilities, and the remainder of the economy's commanding heights. When in 1945, the voters substituted Attlee for Churchill, the immediate agenda bore the stamp of Morrison and the nationalizers rather than that of the theorists.

Drawing upon interviews with the period's survivors, election manifestos, Fabian pamphlets, correspondence, and her father's memoranda and unpublished manuscripts, Elizabeth Durbin recalls an exciting spell of ferment in the 1930s. The pity is that neither in her country nor ours has there been a contemporary parallel to the energy, originality, and hopefulness of democratic socialists half a century ago. □

David Nasaw

Class & the Culture of Consumption

The Morality of Spending: Attitudes Toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940, by Daniel Horowitz. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 254 pp. $26.50.

Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York, by Kathy Peiss. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 288 pp. $24.95.

Cultural historians, like other historians, are forever in search of transitional periods, moments when historical change occurs so dramatically that long-term developments are encapsulated in almost self-explanatory words and images. U.S. cultural historians locate one such period somewhere in the latter half of the nineteenth century when a "culture of abundance" (to use Warren Susman's term) with new institutions (department stores, amusement parks, nightclubs, and hotels), new forms (the comics and moving pictures), new values (a penny saved was a penny wasted), and a new style (exuberance, expressiveness, and lack of restraint) contested an older, genteel culture and its institutions, forms, values, and style.

It is impossible to date the birth of this culture with any specificity (especially if one substitutes the word "consumption" for "abundance," as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

many have done). Historians like Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, authors of *The Birth of a Consumer Society,* have, in the past decade, been pushing back its birth date and extending its gestation period. Daniel Horowitz, in *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes Toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940,* takes the most common approach of U.S. cultural historians by locating the transitional period around the turn of the century.

Horowitz informs us early that his study is not of the consumer culture itself but rather "an intellectual history of attitudes toward consumption." In defining his work as intellectual history, he justifies his choice of focus. The "attitudes toward consumption" that he is concerned with are those that were written down and can be read back. "We need to know more," states Horowitz, "about the meaning consumption and spending had for workers and immigrants. I treat attitudes toward workers and immigrants, not the responses of these groups themselves." Fortunately, a number of historians have taken up the challenge of uncovering "the meaning consumption and spending had for workers and immigrants." Kathy Peiss, in *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York,* focuses directly on this subject, though her book is also instructive in other areas.

Approaching his subject with intelligence and imagination, Horowitz interrogates "attitudes toward the consumer society" by examining the numerous "budget studies," most of them of working- and lower-middle-class households, that were produced and published between 1875 and the late 1930s. In these studies, intended to be sober reports of "how Americans spent their money," social critics and commentators assessed and criticized the ways in which working people lived their lives. The decline in the workweek during the last half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth provided workers with more leisure time. Concurrently, a decrease in the amount of the family budget that had to be devoted to food, shelter, and clothing gave them more money to spend.

The budget experts wanted the workers and immigrants to use their free time and money for "the 'proper enjoyment of . . . evening privileges' like lectures, concerts, and social events at settlement houses." But, as they lamented in their studies, the attraction of the new entertainments was such that a good deal of time and money was being squandered on saloons, dance halls, and "other forms of commercial recreation."

In the second decade of the new century, the budget experts shifted their attention from the workers to the "new" and expanding middle classes. All agreed that discretionary income should not be wasted on fun and frivolity. Middle-class families should, instead, spend their extra income on education, culture, and refinement. While the working class wasted time and money on commercial amusements, the "new" middle class would, the critics hoped, follow the lead of the "old" one in spending on "advancement."

These hopes did not last long. By the middle 1920s and 1930s, Horowitz argues, social critics like Helen and Robert Lynd had become so thoroughly disheartened by the ways in which the culture of consumption had permeated the lives of working class and middle class alike that they rejected it entirely, hoping somehow to substitute in its place an older, preindustrial, artisanal culture.

Kathy Peiss focuses on the other side of the story. In her beautifully written, meticulously documented, and precisely argued study, she describes in detail how young working women spent their free time and money.

By the early years of the new century, more and more young women were employed full time in New York City's factories, stores, and offices. Though many, especially in the stores and factories, worked overtime in the busy seasons, the average number of hours in the workday had decreased since the 1880s and would continue to decrease through the 1920s.

No matter where they worked or for how many hours a week, the women seldom earned a decent or even a living wage. Almost all lived in their parents' homes or in cramped, underheated, unventilated rooms. For most, home was no "haven in a heartless world," but a kingdom ruled by fathers and mothers and the last place they wanted to spend their free time. Fortunately, there was a world where, for the price of admission, they could escape the restrictions of workplace and tenement, employers and parents.

The young working women of the city saved nickels and dimes for admission to the city's dance halls, amusement parts, vaudeville shows, and movies theaters. They entered, unescorted, into this new world devoted to pleasure, a world where young, unmarried men and women could chat, dance, giggle, flirt, and have a good time.

Once within, the women looked for men to "treat" them to drinks, food, and fun in return for a brief flirtation. The women understood the danger they courted in accepting "treats" from strange

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men, but they earned just enough to buy their way into the theaters, amusement parks, and dance halls. Unless they could find a man to treat them, their pleasures would be short-lived. They protected themselves, as best they could, by arriving and departing with "lady friends."

THESE YOUNG WOMEN KNEW precisely what they were doing. They spent a good deal of their discretionary income, for example, on fashionable cloaks and willow plume hats, not because they were pleasure addicts or mindless followers of silly fads, but because they knew that, in public, they would be identified by their dress as either slovenly working girls or fashionable young ladies. Clothes, like it or not, made the woman. Without the right ones, they would attract neither the men they needed to treat them nor the respect they sought on the streets and in the dance halls.

By writing about these young women as active subjects rather than mere pawns, Peiss opens up a new perspective on the the twentieth-century culture of abundance. The new amusements, entertainments, and fashions met "real," Not false, needs. they offered women something they could not find elsewhere; not a utopia but a privileged space int he world where they could interact with men, free from the controlling gaze of parents and employers. If freedom, romance, and adventure could not be found there, they were, at least, closer at hand than anywhere else.

Daniel Horowitz and Kathy Peiss are part of a generation of cultural historians that works with the language and categories of class. They are interested not in culture in the abstract but in the development of class cultures. Peiss, in subtitling her book, "Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York," implies that there was something distinctive about these young women and their leisure activities. There was, she asserts, a "cultural conflict" that developed along (as well as within) class lines, "as middle-class ideals of womanhood met the flamboyant working-class version of the "New Woman" and "middle-class women" guided by "Victorian values" opposed the entrance of working women into the new arenas of public entertainment.

I wonder how far such language takes us and how much it obscures. Is the conflict between those who argued for a genteel culture of uplife, refinement, and prudence and those who patronized the dance halls, amusement parks, vaudeville palaces, and movie theaters best described in terms of "class"? What do we gain—and what do we lose—by such a formulation, especially when we acknowledge that the middle-class culture of gentility was soon overwhelmed?

Horowitz attempts to skirt the problems by dividing the middle class into an "old" segment that upheld the culture of restraint and a "new" segment attracted to the culture of consumption. Regrettably, he can offer no evidence to back up this assumption.

There is little or no evidence to support the view of a congruence between social class and cultural attitudes implied in the use of "middle-class" as a modifier in referring to critics of the new culture of abundance. What little evidence we have argues the opposite—that the new public entertainments appealed to working and middle class alike. Peiss makes it clear that the new Coney Island amusement parks crossed class lines in their appeal, though, as she suggests, "class distinctions did not entirely disappear."

What we see developing here are new cultural institutions, forms, values, and styles. The amusement park, as Peiss shows, represents "not only the decline of a genteel middle-class cultural hegemony," but the emergence of a culture that, in John Kasson's words, prizes release instead of restraint and encourages rather than discourages "intimacy and an easing of inhibitions" between men and women and "extravagance, gaiety, abandon, revelry . . . against the values of thrift, sobriety, industry, and ambition."

This is not to say that the new culture of abundance was fully democratized or knew no class distinctions. It is to argue that what was most striking about the new culture was the commonalities across class lines, not the divisions.

Peiss devotes an entire chapter to what she calls "dance madness." "The dance hall," she tells us, "was the favorite arena in which young working women played out their cultural style." The culture of the dance halls encouraged release, escape, sensuality, expressiveness, movement, and fun. And that appealed to men and women of all classes. Although the dance halls that Peiss describes were patronized exclusively by working men and women, there were, as she recognizes, analogous institutions for "the elite and the middle classes." In *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930,* Lewis Erenberg describes the appeal of the nightclubs, cabarets, and cafés to young upper- and middle-class men and women in much the same way that Peiss describes the public dance halls' attraction for working-class women. In the new nightspots, businessmen and their wives, socialites and debutantes, respectable and prosperous men

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and women enjoyed themselves 'til the wee hours of the morning, dancing "the turkey trot, Texas Tommy, bunny hug, monkey hug, lame duck, foxtrot, and tango."

THERE WERE, OF COURSE, ENORMOUS DIFFERENCES between the dance halls and cabarets. As Peiss notes, correctly I think, the "tough dancing" in the dance halls was far more blatantly sexual than the dancing in the nightclubs. The nightclubs also, by seating customers at tables and excluding unescorted women, regulated the "promiscuous" and "intimate" contact between men and women that took place in the dance halls. Nonetheless, the similarities far outweigh the differences.

When we turn from amusement parks and dance halls to vaudeville, movies and "fashion," we see the same congruence in cultural styles and values. The types of vaudeville acts and films that appeared in the neighborhood theaters and nickel dumps were the same as those shown in the lavish "palaces" in the downtown entertainment districts. Working- and middle-class women also wore the same types of clothes when they went "out." Though the quality of the shirtwaists, willow plume hats, and jewelry worn by the working women was no doubt inferior, the "style" was the same as that of more prosperous women.

Twentieth-century cultural historians are indeed caught in a bind. To adopt the adjective "mass" in referring to the new culture gets us nowhere, for the term is usually a pejorative one, used by those who feared (and fear) that the middle classes are being infected by lower-class habits. On the other hand, it is evident that the old class distinctions fall apart in twentieth-century culture.

What we see developing is a new "public" culture. And this public culture rapidly displaces the older, established class-bound institutions that preceded it. The home, the quintessential "private" domain, becomes less and less important as a center of entertainment, amusement, and social life. "Going out"—defined as leaving home—becomes synonymous with leisure-time activities. Immigrant social clubs and elite men's clubs, church and church-sponsored associations, union halls, fraternal orders, women's clubs and sewing circles are all displaced by the theaters, movies, ballparks, and amusement parks. Even the saloon—which, as Roy Rosenzweig demonstrates in *Eight Hours For What We Will,* was in its heyday a workingman's club tied to the workplace (and, I would argue, only quasi-public)—is dethroned by the coming of the movie theater.

It is much easier to chronicle the emergence of this new public culture than it is to understand its role in twentieth-century social life. What part did it play in the assimilation of the immigrant working class? What role did it play in the ascendance of a new American patriotism, defined by a celebration of capitalism and its wonders?

As we enter what is perhaps a new "transitional period" in cultural history, with rock concerts, Broadway theater, movies, and opera being piped into our homes and the "public" culture in full retreat before the new home entertainment technologies, it may be the perfect time for reflection on our recent past—and its larger meanings. The two books under review provide an excellent starting point. □

David J. Garrow

A Sharp Critique of Jesse Jackson

THE JESSE JACKSON PHENOMENON: THE CRISIS OF PURPOSE IN AFRO-AMERICAN POLITICS, by Adolph L. Reed, Jr. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 170 pp. Cloth, $17.50. Paper, $5.95

Jesse Jackson is an important figure in American politics and a 1984 presidential candidate who stands ready to repeat that race in 1988. Nonetheless, Jackson is not a credible, legitimate, or desirable leader for black America, argues black Yale political scientist Adolph Reed in this short but immensely stimulating book.

Reed's critique of Jackson's role, unlike many other attacks, is almost completely theoretical and political, not personal. The core of Reed's argument is that in the post-Voting Rights Act era, black elected officials—politicians responsible at the ballot box to an identifiable constituency—are vastly preferable, especially in terms of democratic theory, to black "leaders" such as Jackson, whose representational status is not grounded in any direct, formal linkage to an electoral base.

Reed makes extensive and good use of a distinction between what he terms the "protest elite"—nonpublic officials holding church or organizational roles that used to earn the designation "civil

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rights leaders"—and a newer electoral elite composed of black elected officials. He argues that in an era when black Americans participate freely in the electoral process, and have won the mayoralties of many major cities as well as significant positions in Congress, the continued presence of a protest elite, symbolized most visibly by Jackson, is superfluous.

That "protest" leaders, and Jackson in particular, are not directly accountable to any formal constituency is only one of Reed's points. He contends that the ministerial leadership tradition out of which Jackson comes is undemocratic, even inherently authoritarian. It is undemocratic because it largely lacks mechanisms by which its followers can control or rebuke the apparent spokespersons. Political initiative is exercised in a purely "top down" fashion. It is authoritarian, Reed argues, because it operates with the presumption that positions articulated by the leader are necessarily identical to the interests of the apparent constituents. That assumption of a perfect identity results in "an authoritarian demand for unity that suppresses the right to disagree within the race."

THE "PROTEST" LEADER, Reed contends, is far more dependent on external, nonconstituency sources of support than are elected officials. Rather than drawing their authority from the ballot box, or any other form of accountable community endorsement, protest spokespersons "derive their authority indirectly through recognition by public officials, private elites, and public opinion media." Jackson's public career, especially in the last few years, is a classic example of this phenomenon, in which the American news media played the largest role. "Unable to distinguish between a social movement and a group of people shouting in a church," reporters unquestioningly accepted Jackson as the spokesman for all of black America. "The fundamental and most dubious claim" that Jackson made, "that he was the individual repository of the racial voice, went unchallenged" in the public forum. Whites' ready acceptance of Jackson's self-declared role, Reed observes, is yet one more manifestation of the longtime assumption that all black people think alike, that black America can and should be spoken for by a single leader, and "that standard principles of political representation do not apply among Afro-Americans."

In addition to the news media, Reed sees the white left as a second political element that accepted Jackson's supposed status far too readily and uncritically. Giving no heed to the complaints of some that white progressives supported Jackson's 1984 campaign far less actively than they would have an ideologically similar white candidate, Reed criticizes "the patronizing orientations that define the place of blacks in the purview of liberals and the left" and the "presuppositions" that "reduce to a premise that the black community is peripheral" and hence amount "to a form of racial condescension." In Jackson's case as well as in less-heralded ones, these condescending white attitudes are reflected in "a troublesome tendency to accept superficially articulate black individuals who will associate with the left as generic racial spokespersons."

Beyond his general argument concerning Jackson's fundamentally nonlegitimate political status, Reed also offers a more precisely drawn critique of Jackson's 1984 campaign. First, in what is by far the least persuasive and most poorly handled portion of his book, Reed attempts to argue that Jackson's campaign provided little stimulus for black voter registration and turnout, even in the South, and that Jackson's candidacy also gave little if any "coattail effect" to black contenders in congressional or local races at those same times. If Reed's attempt to support those claims is unpersuasive, he offers a somewhat stronger case for his second criticism, that the Jackson campaign failed "to generate a coherent political program or a discrete policy agenda." Reed emphasizes the campaign's lack of a programmatic agenda more than the potentially sharper critique that the Jackson candidacy never propounded a clear or coherent political strategy. Jackson knew that he could not be nominated; what then was the purpose of concentrating upon the acquiring of convention delegates? To make a protest? Reed shows the problem with this explanation: "Jackson's initiative had little authenticity as a protest candidacy because it never clearly specified the nature of the protest."

Reed expands upon his second, programmatic complaint to reach what is the third overarching theme of the book. "Jackson," he writes, "may be limited in his capacity for programmatic vision by his idiosyncratic opportunism, inconstancy, and self-aggrandizement," but "his lack of critical direction resonates with a much more general state of affairs in the black community. That situation, Reed says, concerns "the Afro-American elite's general failure of political vision" over the past twenty years. That failure has manifested itself in two interrelated ways.

REED ARGUES THAT BOTH BLACK PROTEST and electoral leaders have emphasized political issues that speak more to the interests of the economically

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

better-off segment of black America than to the needs of the growing black underclass. Affirmative action, high-level job appointments, and minority set-aside programs, he says, are concerns that are more attuned to those who are already well off or on their way up than to those with economically bleak or desperate futures. "The entrenched elites," Reed writes, "have been able with impunity to identify collective racial interest with an exceedingly narrow class agenda. The main focus for practical political activity within the black community in this context must be breaking down the illusion of a single racial opinion."

Second, a major reason for the elites' limited policy agenda is their "century-long pattern of uncritical acceptance of fundamental power relations in the general society and reliance on external sources of legitimation." In other words, except for a few idiosyncratic instances like Martin Luther King, Jr., in the 1965-1968 period, America's black leadership has never been seriously interested in propounding or supporting economically redistributive policies. As a result, "the successful incorporation of black leadership into regular channels of policy negotiation" over the past two decades has been a "mixed blessing." The "price of 'effective' participation" for America's current-day black elite has been "the inability to advance the concrete interests of a substantial element of the black constituency." Anyone doubting the general accuracy of Reed's argument on this point need only study or ponder the ideological evolutions—or devolutions—apparent in the political careers of major black mayors such as Andrew Young and Marion Barry, among others.

Reed's book should be recognized as an insightful left critique of a phenomenon that many progressives of all colors readily criticize in private but rarely if ever in public. Reed is calling for a fundamental transformation of Afro-American politics, and for a transformation that will feature the creation of an explicitly redistributive policy agenda aimed at serving the pressing needs of the black underclass. A necessary part of that transformation will be the gradual but increasing replacement of nonelected spokespersons by elected officials who arguably will be somewhat more attuned to working-class and poverty issues than generally has been the case in recent Afro-American political history.

The political scientist in Reed leads him towards a somewhat excessively optimistic view of the potential of these elected officials. In many instances they too, at least as much as Jackson, have displayed little more than a pro forma interest in the underclass and no inclination towards redistributive policies. Nonetheless, this caveat does not undercut the strength of Reed's argument concerning both the superiority of electorally responsive leaders and the need for a redistributively-oriented political agenda among black American leaders.

Reed firmly and explicitly calls for a fundamentally more open and fundamentally more honest debate among progressive Afro-American political activists, a debate that will brush aside the demand that blacks refrain from airing disagreements outside "the family." Along with a new conception of leadership, and a new programmatic agenda, there is also a need to "cultivate a spirit of civic liberalism in Afro-American politics. Dissent must be dissociated from the stigma of race treason." □

Oliver Conant

A Critic's Authority

LIONEL TRILLING AND THE FATE OF CULTURAL CRITICISM, by Mark Krupnick. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press. 207 pp. $21.95 (cloth); $10.95 (paper).

Lionel Trilling wrote with a remarkable assurance. Too much assumption of authority can make a critic seem remote or bullying, but Trilling's essays were never so. His attitude towards his reader was always a *genial* one, to use a word with little currency today. He ranged widely, but never seemed loose or eclectic. It is true that Trilling occasionally liked to escape into abstractions, where the air is thinner than is comfortable to breathe. Now and then one can catch him yielding to an impulse to be provocative for its own sake and the famous style could become overly elaborate and indirect.

It is unfair to blame a man for what is done with his work by others, but it may be true to say that Trilling did not quite realize his power of suggestion over those intent on turning his insights into dogma. He would, I feel sure, have been horrified by the way a phrase of his, like "the adversary culture," has been taken up by the ideologues of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the neoright and wielded like a bludgeon to beat down anything they imagine to be subversive.

Trilling remarks somewhere that the relation of readers to a critic is likely to be an uneasy one, especially if the reader in question is himself given to the practice of criticism. Mark Krupnick is a critic, and a symptom of his uneasy relation to his subject occurs early on in his book, when he lets us know that for his taste Trilling was too interested in gentility, in an ideal of culture as "refinement." In his lifetime Trilling was more than once called a snob, chiefly by other critics and academics. Unlike, say, the later T.S. Eliot, whose critical "dictatorship" was resented as much as it was admired, Trilling didn't come before the public with a set of dogmas (such as Eliot's brand of Anglo-Catholicism). Although Trilling published some of his best work in the *Partisan Review* of earlier decades and up to a point shared its left-wing anti-Stalinism, he managed to keep a certain distance between himself and the New York intellectuals. He was a convinced but not doctrinaire Freudian, an admirer of Trotsky but not a Trotskyist, and, after a brief fellow traveling period in the Great Depression, not a Marxist. He seemed not to come with any handles at all, a singularity that delighted his admirers and exasperated his detractors. So the label "snob," ever handy in a democratic culture to dismiss anyone who dares to show the least interest in manners—and Trilling, of course, made a special study of manners, he liked to say they were "small morals"—was gleefully pinned on him. Krupnick joined in the game himself at one time, going the detractors one better and calling Trilling a reactionary as well, an "upholder of the established order."

Krupnick now explains that "I missed Trilling's leadership at the time and wrote about him with some bitterness. . . . I am not disposed to judge him as harshly now as I did." The neoconservatives, Krupnick observes, were "disappointed" with Trilling's failure to attack the antiwar movement and the radical young, some of whom were his own students at a Columbia University torn by rebellion. ("Disappointed" seems far too mild a word for Norman Podhoretz, who in a 1974 *Commentary* forum turned on his own professor, accusing Trilling to his face of "moral cowardice," a charge he would later elaborate in his 1979 memoir *Breaking Ranks*.) Krupnick, who writes as a man of the left, notes that the left had just as much cause to feel disappointment with Trilling's failure to *support* the antiwar movement.

Krupnick's frustration is understandable, but what does not seem quite reasonable is to have expected Trilling's "leadership." It is hard not to speculate that what Krupnick really wanted back in 1971 was for Trilling to confer a dignifying approval upon the tail end of 1960s' radicalism, to lend it something of his self-confidence and seriousness and grace; really to lend it, as it were, more reality. There is a small irony here when one considers that Trilling had once defined the dominant emotions of snobbery—the sin of which he stood accused by Krupnick and others—as "uneasiness, self-consciousness, self-defensiveness, the sense that one is not quite real but can in some way acquire reality."

Despite Krupnick's hastening to assure his readers that he finds "much to object to in Trilling's social attitudes" his book is in fact a kind of tribute. Krupnick, a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, praises Trilling's work in terms that a reader unfamiliar with the present state of the academic study of literature and especially academic literary theory might well find parochial; but praise it he does nonetheless. He tells us that he wishes to recommend "Trilling's kind of criticism" (the "cultural criticism" of his subtitle) as "an exemplary alternative to the academic criticism we have lately had," i.e., of the theoretical formulations of, among others, Frederic Jameson, Edward W. Said, and Geoffrey Hartman, of deconstructionist criticism and reader-response criticism, of "Lacanian criticism, Foucauldian criticism, Derridean criticism, and Derridean-Marxist-feminist criticism." Krupnick seems eager to demonstrate Trilling's pertinence to these modish critics and the communicants in these rival critical sects. In the process Krupnick makes an interesting argument that Trilling's conception of selfhood as a work of art poses a humanist challenge to the poststructuralist assault on the very idea of the self.

A very thorough, if not always reliable study, *Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism* delves into just about every phase and aspect of Trilling's work, covering all the important works—the 1939 study of Matthew Arnold which started as Trilling's doctoral dissertation, and about which one of Trilling's advisers reportedly said, "But this is a *book*, Mr. Trilling, not a dissertation"; the major essays on Keats, on Dickens, on Wordsworth, on Austen, on the fate of pleasure in the modern world, on the tragic humanism of Freud; the great essay "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," about the problem of the absorption of the spirit of modernist revolt from the collection with the deliberately paradoxical title *Beyond Culture*; *Sincerity and Authenticity*, which Krupnick

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

correctly identifies as "a large historical overview of changing ideals of moral consciousness," and which culminates in an eloquent refusal to accept the view promulgated by R.D. Laing of madness as a form of liberation.

WHENEVER KRUPNICK CONSCIENTIOUSLY MAKES THE effort to see Trilling as a figure in a varied and crowded cultural scene facing the common exigencies and rewards of life in twentieth-century America, he is not convincing. Not wrong, just thin, lacking in a sense of the weight of things. A good example is the choice of the silly title "Communism as Kitsch" for the part of his book which deals with the rejection of communism by Trilling and other intellectuals in the 1930s. To be sure, American communism generated plenty of kitsch, or at least the typical cultural products of the Popular Front had a sentimental, kitschy quality. But seriously to imagine anyone deciding to take a stand against communism for such a reason evinces a trivializing, aestheticizing sense of what moved those men and women. When for example Krupnick asserts that "Trilling's response to the Stalinists is a literary man's response," he hopelessly elides Trilling's having had to contend with the *fact* of communism, its real presence in the world.

Time after time Krupnick yields to the impulse to categorize his subject. Apparently there was a 1930s Trilling, and a would-be gentleman Trilling, an academic-humanist Trilling, an "Uptown" (Columbia, respectable) Trilling and a "Downtown" (Greenwich Village, radical) Trilling. In the 1950s there was a book-club, slippered Trilling, and, *per contra*, a rather wild existentialist Trilling, the author of *The Opposing Self*. In the 1960s Trilling was "bewildered." Somehow, however, he managed to recover from his bewilderment enough to write *Sincerity and Authenticity*, which was "Hegelian." Krupnick likes to categorize Trilling by "isms," as in this sentence: "His idealism, derived from Arnold and Victorian moralism, is at odds with his realism, derived from Freud and the modernist revolt against Victorian idealism." Or else he'll parcel Trilling out decade by decade: "The drift of Trilling's criticism is unmistakable. He moved from a social conception of personality in the thirties and forties to a more abstract moral and aesthetic conception in the sixties and seventies."

CATEGORIZING IS NOT BY ITSELF ALWAYS A BAD THING in criticism, and when one is forced to come to grips with a mind as supple as Trilling's, it is an understandable temptation. But far too often Krupnick's categorizing is really pigeonholing. This all too common critical habit is generally accompanied by interpretative error and outright distortion. Both appear in Krupnick's commentary on two of Trilling's writings that I took some care to check—a long essay on William Dean Howells, the nineteenth-century American novelist, and a brief review of a book about Leon Trotsky's assassin.

Krupnick's comment on the Howells essay, that "It says something about Trilling's central concerns in the early fifties that in his long essay on Howells he does not quote a single line of that writer," is false as fact. Trilling does quote from *A Modern Instance*, and discusses this and other novels in some detail. So far from Howells serving as a mere pretext, Trilling's purpose in this essay is in part to urge an experience of Howells "not as he exists in the textbooks, but as he really is on his own page." Krupnick, however, is so eager to categorize the Howells essay as an instance of Trilling's "strategy" of "using a comfortable, old-fashioned writer as a way of addressing a new, unprecedented moral crisis" (brought on by the enormities revealed after the war) that he creates a wrong impression of what Trilling is actually about in the essay.

What Krupnick seems to be unwilling to admit here is what he elsewhere acknowledges as a strength in Trilling's criticism: the way his discussion of a given author extends to larger considerations. Howells's civic vision leads Trilling to ponder the "devaluation of all moderate sentiments" (the phrase, quoted by Trilling, is André Gide's) that thinking people must confront in the aftermath of World War II. And this is indeed one of Trilling's central concerns "in the early fifties." But Howells is as much the subject of the Howells essay as the English Romantics or the development of the novel since Cervantes are the subjects of the essays in *The Liberal Imagination*, essays that also move towards a subtle polemical assessment of the deference to Stalinist communism and the moral prestige of the Soviet Union on the part of certain educated Americans who called themselves liberals. Trilling could do this kind of thing because his criticism, almost from the start of his writing life to its close, employed the insights of literary works to further our comprehension of ourselves, the lives we lead, and the lives we would have others lead.

What Krupnick does with the piece on Trotsky's assassination is less serious but still unsettling. Krupnick asserts that "in that essay Trilling has nothing to say about Trotsky as ideologist of the Russian Revolution or leader of the Red Army." He goes on to take exception to Trilling's interest in "the high valuation he [Trotsky] put upon personal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

manners." "How odd," Krupnick writes, "this rapt attention to manners and style in the case of a figure so important for his acts and ideas." What Trilling really writes in his review of Isaac Don Levine's book *The Mind of an Assassin* includes the observations that

> It is, no doubt, all too easy to regard the character of Leon Trotsky in a sentimental way, led to do so by his defeat and exile, and by the drama and pathos of his death. He was surely a ruthless man, as the terrible Kronstadt episode shows, and had he remained in power in Russia, and grown in power, it might well have come to pass that he would have become a repellent figure, even though he would never have shown the vulgar brutality of Stalin. . . . He [Trotsky] had the pride of the intellectual, to which was further added the pride of the soldier, justifiably, for he had created the Soviet armies and had commanded them in their eventual victory.

Trilling's "rapt" attention to Trotsky's manners turns out to be not much more than his taking note of the fact that Trotsky had conceived a distaste for a visitor "on account of his bad manners." The visitor was the man who called himself Mercador, who subsequently showed himself to be so bad mannered as to sink an ice axe deep into Trotsky's skull.

Despite the distortions and the unease—the distortions probably stemming from the unease—*Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism* is, I repeat, a tribute. The book is in some rare and strict sense of the so often unmeaning phrase, a labor of love.

But to acknowledge the gift Trilling gave to us all—the gift of himself—is not the same as understanding the nature of that gift, understanding it not in a pigeonholing way but from the inside, as Trilling himself might have done. In Trilling we are confronted by an example of a mind at once authoritative and free, with writing that fulfills the Renaissance prescription of *sprezzatura*, characterized by a fullness of apprehension of the whole human context of art, by an unbelligerent passion for moral and political responsibility, by irony robust and delicate in turn, and by lucid expression. What remains mysterious after all his achievements have been assigned a place is the sense Trilling had of his own authority. What, in this modest and otherwise unassuming man, produced, or licensed the conviction of his power to judge?

WE'RE NEVER LIKELY TO KNOW FOR SURE. We can, however, be fairly sure of what it was *not* based on. Trilling did not base his sense of his own authority on any assertive pride, common enough among literary intellectuals of his generation. The role of critic was one he never felt comfortable in. He had planned a career as a novelist, and could never quite bring himself to accept without some surprise on his part, without, as he says, "an internal grin," the public's identification of him as a critic. He thought of his earlier ambition to write fiction as "in some sense abiding." Certainly it shows in the almost uncanny instances of sympathetic observation, "novelistic" in their acuity, to be enjoyed in the essays.

THE FASCINATING EXCERPTS from Lionel Trilling's notebooks published in the fiftieth anniversary issue of *Partisan Review* reveal something of how Trilling thought of his professional standing and status, and may provide a clue to the mystery of his authority—which is, I suspect, a mystery of the man's character more than anything else.

It is June 13, 1936. Trilling, faced with a threat that he would be let go from his teaching job at Columbia University, has been trying to convince his professors to retain him as an instructor of English, forcing each in turn to acknowledge the merit of his teaching, encountering in the process an ugly irruption of genteel anti-Semitism in one of his colleagues. In the previous entries Trilling notes in considerable detail the progress of his struggle to be reinstated. Now, with the success of what he calls his "explosion at Columbia"—he is to be reinstated—Trilling writes that he possesses, and somehow it does not seem extravagant, "a sense of invulnerability." He adds, "Sense of my own stature and less concern with it."

Twelve years pass. In an otherwise undated entry for 1948, Trilling writes that he has received the official word of his promotion to the rank of "full" professor at Columbia with a raise in salary to $9,000. He is bemused to discover in himself no feeling of elation, such as he would almost certainly have felt earlier, only relief that he has to make no more bids for promotion and annoyance that he has not been offered $10,000. Then he launches into a series of rather surprisingly punishing self-accusations. He confesses to "a sense of the absurdity of my having this rank at all—for no one could be more ignorant than I, without knowledge of any classical language, without any real command of any modern language, with no very wide reading and a great and growing laziness about reading and no wish for investigation." But, still taking stock, he admits to himself that "I have only a gift of dealing rather sensibly with literature." Surely much of the substance of Trilling's sense of authority resides in the quiet way this truth about himself is stated. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George Packer

Orwell as Propagandist

ORWELL: THE LOST WRITINGS, edited by W. J. West. New York: Arbor House. 304 pp. $20.00.

"At present I'm just an orange that's been trodden on by a very dirty boot." "[The BBC's] atmosphere is something halfway between a girls' school and a lunatic asylum, and all we are doing at present is useless, or slightly worse than useless." "I have left the BBC after two wasted years in it." Thus, in letters and diaries, George Orwell described his two years of broadcasting to India for the wartime BBC.

W. J. West, a British scholar, now argues that Orwell was wrong about the worth of his wartime experiences: that "the key to Orwell's evolution from the slightly pedantic and unpolished author of prewar days lies in the two years he spent as a Talks Producer in the Indian Section of the BBC's Eastern Service from August 1941 until November 1943." In short, not wasted years at all. West unearthed the evidence for this in 1984 in the archives of the BBC—over sixty scripts and news commentaries prepared by Orwell. Under the title *The Lost Writings*, West has published sixteen of them, along with a lengthy introduction, and two-hundred-odd letters Orwell wrote to various contributors to his radio program.

It is legitimate for a scholar to challenge a writer's evaluation of his own work or experience; and any admirer of Orwell's writing wishes West success. But if there is proof that the BBC period was "the key to Orwell's evolution," we don't have it yet.

Still, certain of these pieces are almost up to the level of his published essays, and the book as a whole—strangely, by its shortcomings—opens up some thoughts about Orwell and the position of the political writer in his time.

Among the better pieces are those on Shaw, Wilde, and *Macbeth*, and an essay on Jack London in which Orwell says, "He could foresee the rise of Fascism, and the cruel struggles which would have to be gone through, because of the streak of brutality which he had in himself" (is there a small portion of self-description in this?). Best of all is an imaginary interview with Jonathan Swift, in which Orwell and Swift debate the theme of progress: he gives to Swift the voice of doubt, to himself the voice of belief, but both are essentially Orwell, hashing out the question of whether the machine age has been beneficial or destructive. Orwell insists "the poorest person nowadays is better off, so far as physical comfort goes, than a nobleman in Saxon times, or even in the reign of Queen Anne," but Swift counters, "Has that added anything to true wisdom or true refinement?" So the question of progress becomes a question of what kind of progress. Elsewhere Orwell wrote that socialists must admit that once economic security has been assured the "problem of man's place in the universe will still remain." But here Orwell the socialist argues—against himself—the case for material progress, recognizing that "the belly comes before the soul, not in the scale of values but in point of time." The interview is imaginative and deeply felt—the only piece in the book that can stand with Orwell's most polished essays.

West makes a lot out of Orwell's radio adaptation of "The Fox," a short story by Ignazio Silone. Because Orwell began *Animal Farm* two months after the broadcast of the story, whose allegorical subplot—a fox stealing into a chicken coop—is similar to a minor incident at the end of the first chapter of *Animal Farm*, we are told "The Fox" "inspired Orwell to write *Animal Farm*." But Orwell himself explained that the idea for the book came to him one day six years before it was written, when he saw a boy beating a cart-horse and wondered what would happen if animals became aware of their power to rise up against their human masters. Why not accept this rather than believing that one hasty radio script led to so complex a political fable?

Even the best of *The Lost Writings* lack the wit and insight that by then were the trademark of Orwell's print journalism. He was inhibited by his audience—educated Indians who lived thousands of miles from the European situation and may not have been tuning in anyway; also, he wrote while two officials from the Ministry of Information looked over his shoulder—the "Policy" censor and the "Security" censor. Although he insisted he never broadcast anything he "would not have said as a private individual," censorship inevitably restricted and irritated him. Reading the scripts, one feels his sense of futility sapping almost every page.

The book leaves us with this question: Why did Orwell do it for so long? And the answer suggests that the most interesting aspect of *The Lost Writings* is not in its contents but in such a book's existing at all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When war broke out Orwell did everything he could to enlist, but was found unfit because of the lung disease that eventually killed him. He accepted the BBC offer with relief. Contemporaries like George Woodcock sharply criticized him for doing propaganda work, and today the popular image of Orwell as hater of official lies makes it hard to understand how he could write a letter requesting "something about the extortions of the Japanese, looting, raping, and the opium traffic etc."

But it would be a mistake to think Orwell was completely hostile to government and serving the state. There was another Orwell at this time, the Orwell of "England Your England" and "My Country Right or Left," who scorned pacifism and believed that England—the hidden England of clerks and factory workers—was worth saving. He must have decided that doing propaganda for the BBC had value. Others reached the same conclusion: the leading writers and intellectuals of the day—Eliot, Spender, Empson, Forster, Herbert Read—parade through the broadcasts, committing themselves and their work to a slightly demeaning forum and without pay.

IT MAY BE HARD FOR US TO IMAGINE such widespread sense of sacrifice to a larger, national cause. But during the war, following the intensely political decade of the 1930s, almost every important writer in Britain had a public role. A lot of bad writing resulted, but also a level of political involvement that is now nearly unthinkable.

In "Writers and Leviathan," an essay written after the war, Orwell took up the theme of the hazards of political activity for writers:

> We should draw a sharper distinction than we do at present between our political and our literary loyalties, and should recognise that a willingness to do certain distasteful but necessary things does not carry with it any obligation to swallow the beliefs that usually go with them. When a writer engages in politics he should do so as a citizen, as a human being, but not as a writer . . . Whatever else he does in the service of his party, he should never write for it . . . There is no reason why he should not write in the most crudely political way, if he wishes to. Only he should do so as an individual, an outsider, at the most an unwelcome guerrilla on the flank of a regular army.

At the BBC Orwell found himself not "an unwelcome guerrilla" but an officer directing some rather ineffective assaults. By the time he wrote "Writers and Leviathan," he had left behind that wearying experience and had nearly finished *1984*. The bleakness, the sense of moral squalor, the disgust with bureaucracy and propaganda in his last book have some of their roots in the years of *The Lost Writings*. That is its greatest—paradoxically, negative—value. It is a witness, not through moments of insight or great writing, but through the sheer accumulation of broadcasts and letters, through its existence in the first place, to the age and the writer's beleaguered life. And it is a sign of the distance separating us from Orwell's age that writers today hardly think about the dilemma at all. Instead of engaging in "distasteful but necessary things," the best generally lack conviction, commenting on politics only to affirm their moral superiority to the fools who make decisions; while the worst are full of passionate intensity, and advocate positions whose bloody results they know will never be attributed to them. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

The Problem of Terror

Editors:

For years Michael Walzer has shed light for me on matters concerning violence and politics. I certainly agree with his contention (in "What's Terrorism—And What Isn't," *Dissent*, Summer 1986) that sloppy terminology can be used to confuse issues and excuse the inexcusable. I have, however, a few questions about his objection to calling the American bombing of Libyan civilians "state terror."

Walzer says, "To aim at such targets . . . may have been wrong, but the wrong was not terroristic in character. It was one more example of American hubris: an arrogant overconfidence in our own technology. Moral men and women, concerned to avoid civilian deaths, should not put their faith in smart bombs."

1. Suppose the decision was not one of "hubris" or "faith," but, as I think more likely, a simple calculation that the risk of civilian deaths was acceptable? (This is the kind of decision the Israeli government faces all the time. I do not take its need for self-defense lightly, but it has always worried me that innocent people are sometimes killed—and that more terrorists are created.) It seems to me that, if one wants to defend attacks on terrorists hiding among civilians, one has to recognize that, for the civilian population, the result is still terror, i.e., "the indiscriminate or random" deaths of innocents.

2. Nicaragua serves as another case where these questions arise. The mining of Nicaraguan harbors could be seen as American hubris via the CIA, but was it not also terror in respect to the nonmilitary casualties we may have caused in a country that has not attacked us? And what about the *contras*—in the name of free institutions—plundering, raping, attacking medical personnel?

Would not our government's refusal to accept the decision of the World Court on this issue—and lying about the composition of that court—suggest that it knows it cannot defend itself against not only the term, but the fact, of terror?

Walzer argues—about the bombing of Libya—that there are many options in fighting terrorism, "none of them pretty"—but that to apply the vocabulary of terrorism "serves the terrorists . . . because it suggests that terror is all there is, the only real option, with every other policy a mask for the attack upon innocence." These are powerful words—all the more so because they seem to apply to some of the acts and attitudes of our own or other Western governments. One can only hope, with Walzer, that "Sometimes these days the world looks like that, but as long as we have arguments and choices to make, it is not wholly like that."

I know I have cited cases presenting different choices, and that sometimes very ugly measures may be the best or only defense. But I would argue that one choice we have to make is never to kid ourselves when terror is used to fight terror.

Jeremy Larner
Berkeley, Calif.

Michael Walzer Replies

Jeremy Larner and I have no disagreement with regard to Nicaragua, so let's focus on the Libyan raid. He suggests that if we attack terrorists who are "hiding among civilians," the attack is terroristic in character for those civilians who are injured and killed. We are using terror to fight terror and ought not to "kid ourselves." But this piece of seemingly tough-minded reasoning makes it impossible to distinguish an attack on terrorists hiding among civilians from an attack on civilians simply. We can fight terrorism by repeating it, that is, by striking indiscriminately at the people the terrorists claim to be defending. Or we can fight terrorism by refusing to repeat it, that is, by aiming only at the terrorists. The second strategy is morally better than the first, even if some civilians are killed when it is put into effect. The test of the second strategy is the willingness of the antiterrorists to take risks themselves in order to reduce the risks they impose on innocent civilians. Larner suggests a more severe test: that no civilians are ever put at risk. But that would make it impossible to fight terrorists hiding among civilians—and it would guarantee that all terrorists would hide in that way.

Larner, it seems to me, makes a common mistake here: He describes a morality so pure as to be ineffectual, and he insists that political effectiveness must always be immoral, brutal—in this case, terroristic. But the chief purpose of moral argument is to help us choose among alternative paths to the effects we aim at. Purity is not much of a help. There are, however, many different ways of losing one's purity, and some of these are preferable to others. Hence, and this was the point of my article, we need a language in which to communicate our moral preferences. □

Thumbs Down

Editors:

Irving Howe's recent essay on the evils of Reaganism ("The Spirit of the Times: Greed, Nostalgia, Ideology and War Whoops," Fall 1986) was disappointingly light on economic analysis and heavy-handed on demonology. It appears to be one of those political sermons aimed at raising the morale (and perhaps the consciousness) of the shrinking choir—but I doubt that it achieves even that limited aim.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Howe is so intent on excoriating President Reagan, Lee Iacocca, Saul Bellow, Yuppies, the *Fortune* 500, and the editors of *Commentary* that he lets himself get carried away to the point of wildly overshooting the mark. For example: the neoconservative clan may indeed overreach reality in its criticisms of the doctrine of Moral Equivalence espoused by some leftist critics of U.S. foreign policy (although one wishes Howe would have provided examples), but Howe is clearly wrong when he labels the neocon's concerns "groundless" and asserts that "no sensible person believes anything of the sort." One need look no further than the February 27th, 1984 debate at the Oxford Union to see that Howe is in error. On that occasion, Caspar Weinberger debated E.P. Thompson on precisely that topic: *Resolved that there is no moral difference between the foreign policies of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.* Weinberger's 271 to 232 victory does not suggest that Howe's optimism is warranted. The recent pronouncements on national security policy issuing from the left wings of the British Labour party and Germany's Social Democrats (to say nothing of the Greens) seem to entail beliefs similar to those expressed by the minority at Oxford. In short, Moral Equivalence theory is a real issue. . . .

All in all, Howe's essay is, or so it seems to me, a plea to the dwindling ranks of democratic socialists/liberals to struggle bravely onward—criticize, criticize, criticize! But there is criticism and there is criticism. To the degree that Howe's essay serves as a model for (and not just a goad to) political criticism, it is terribly disappointing. The political options are not so limited as to resolve into a simple choice between silence or criticism. The choices are between current trends (a dynamic status quo) and all the feasible alternatives that can be produced. Mere criticism, as opposed to silence, may appear to challenge the status quo—but as long as it identifies no feasible alternatives it is sterile negativism. Criticism is, of course, required in the process of developing alternatives: the sort of problem-centered criticism that carefully investigates the basis of social and economic problems, not the person-centered criticism that delights in castigating political adversaries. After all, it is not Franklin Roosevelt's rhetorical attacks on Herbert Hoover that he is remembered for, but the pragmatic alternatives he offered and the hope those alternatives instilled in a demoralized nation.

Robert M. Blair
Wheaton, Md.

Irving Howe Replies

Neoconservative writers have not, to my knowledge, tried to develop in a sustained way their charge that liberals and leftists are guilty of "moral equivalence" theory, namely, the idea that Soviet totalitarianism and Western democracy are equally bad or repressive. The neocons prefer to mutter this darkly—here, for instance, is Roger Kimball in the *New Criterion*, January 1986, accusing the fiercely anti-Communist Czech émigré writer Milan Kundera of believing "that freedom and man's privacy are threatened as much in Western democracies as under Communism." Now, that is not what E.P. Thompson was asserting in his debate with Weinberger. Their debate focussed on *foreign policy*, and if I understand Thompson (which isn't the same as agreeing with him), he would maintain that while democratic society is greatly preferable to Soviet dictatorship, nevertheless the foreign policies of both sides threaten the peace of the world equally. This seems to me significantly different from what the neocons charge leftists with saying.

Still, I don't want to be churlish about this and am ready to admit I should have written, "Few sensible people" etc. I hope this will soothe Mr. Blair. □

The Saturn Agreement

Editors:

Patricia Cayo Sexton's birthday praise of the United Automobile Workers [*Dissent*, Fall 1986] carefully places the Saturn agreement with General Motors in the context of a concessionary period, and in this way excuses without rebutting the serious charges against this pact. By invoking at length an unproductive ideological factionalism from the union's past, and centering that discussion around Victor Reuther, who also happens to be the main critic of the contract, Sexton discredits opposition within the union to Saturn.

What can it possibly mean for the UAW to attach a rider to its most important agreement in years claiming that the contract will not be used as a precedent for other negotiations? And what can it mean when GM refuses to co-sign or otherwise recognize that rider? The union cannot have it both ways, and Saturn-type arrangements have already been introduced in other plants, but Sexton refers to this rider and other defenses from the leadership without comment. If there is, for example, precedent at the NUMMI plant in California for "prenatal" agreements, sealed before workers are hired, this makes the Saturn pact more worrisome, not less. It is unarguable, as Reuther charges, that these contracts are antidemocratic. Also, the union has a toehold in Tennessee, but it may be dangerous to attempt such a controversial arrangement in a right-to-work state, which by definition could dismantle instead of strengthen the union, and as a defense from the UAW board this point seems after the fact, since the contract was negotiated before the plant site in Tennessee was chosen.

The main precedent that the Saturn pact has not so much set as unleashed, and which is written into the agreement, is a "philosophy of total cooperation." It has drawn Donald Ephlin, of the union's GM division, to Nashville to lecture on "Building Bridges Instead of Walls," and encouraged the *New York Times* to brand critics of this approach "reactionary." But few, including Sexton, look at what cooperation with GM means for workers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At Saturn, workers will be organized into a team production system, which will allow them to give suggestions toward improving the efficiency of the plant and quality of the product. They also receive a 20 percent pay cut. Thus, in a most condescending and exploitative way, the Saturn contract "allows" workers to use their creativity to benefit the company, and then, in effect, charges them for it. The other much-touted result of cooperation places union officials on business committees that monitor the efficiency of the plant. Besides being drastically outnumbered in the groups, the unionists must now assume a burden generally reserved for management. Since that pay cut can potentially be earned back through a profit-sharing system, unionists are faced with the conflicting impulses to protect workers or their pay. And perhaps in trade for this, the union has reduced the presence of full-time officials in the plant by 80 percent.

The new team system of production at Saturn represents an institutionalization of quality-of-work-life circles, which have been shown to encourage close monitoring of individual performance, competition among workers, and, as Guillermo Grenier wrote in the Summer 1986 issue of *Dissent*, a "misplaced loyalty to the corporation." The increased job security that GM promises at Saturn translates into job cutting, as the company now plans to close nine factories in Michigan, California, and elsewhere, firing 32,500 blue-collars. The Saturn plant will employ 6,000 at full swing, and recent news from Spring Hill suggests that that time is much farther away than GM originally stated. Thus even the main point of specific praise that Sexton has for the UAW—maintaining high membership—is jeopardized by Saturn and the possibility for similar contracts in the future.

ANTHONY BORDEN
New York, N.Y.

PATRICIA CAYO SEXTON Replies

My UAW notes were not meant to "discredit" Saturn critics, for in this case and all others dissent can be very useful, at least when it isn't simply crazed by malice, fanaticism, or bravado. It can keep leadership on its toes and it can also be a valuable union chip in negotiating good settlements. It can also, as at Hormel, sabotage even the best attainable settlements.

My notes, however, were much less about Saturn than about the state of the union, the undeserved badmouthing of unionism by friend and foe, and the resulting drift of public opinion toward dangerous and undemocratic political options.

Saturn was not on the agenda of the UAW Constitutional Convention, but it will be at the 1987 Collective Bargaining Convention, though as an item of diminishing importance. Regrettably, Anthony Borden focuses on this non-agenda topic and says nothing about the admirable proceedings that *did* issue from the Constitutional Convention.

When and if Saturn opens, it will be only a rather small drop in the auto bargaining bucket. The Saturn agreement is—and not very arguably—the best in the South, which is a center of crippling hostility to unionism. (Not bad for a union and an industry caught in a defensive world trade posture.) To say, as Borden does, that initiating a controversial agreement in a right-to-work state will be too risky is tantamount to abandoning the South, since all union agreements are controversial there. In fact, not much is riskier for labor than being permanently shut out of the South, and certainly fear of risk-taking will not help labor to break in. Though Saturn's location in Tennessee was announced a few days after the agreement was signed, its southern locale was in fact known to the union well before the signing.

The agreement reduces "base compensation" from the standard GM agreement (to $13.45 per hour for "technicians"—the unskilled and semiskilled—and $15.49 for "skilled technicians" during the first year—not too bad for the South), but the *effective* wage rate, including various add-ons, is expected to equal that of the standard contract.

As for the spill-over issue and UAW President Bieber's rider informing GM that the agreement was not "a precedent regarding the Union's policy at any other facility," it is true that GM did not "approve" this rider, but then it does not usually approve union intentions or bargaining goals, especially not for *future* agreements covering *other* plants. (Only workers in those other plants, which in GM are separate entities from Saturn, will decide on intentions and spill-over.)

Saturn's approach to compensation, labor process, work rules, and worker participation is experimental. Saturn workers may like it, or parts of it, and they may not. If they don't, they will do the usual thing, change it or vote it out.

Saturn aside, however, many workers want more say about work management and, over the long haul, if it is industrial democracy we seek, we will all need many more lessons in self-management and workplace democracy than we are getting. Whether Saturn will encourage or retard such positive growth remains to be seen. I would not myself write it off simply because the word "cooperation" crops up. Cooperation can mean capitulation, as in the relation of Soviet labor unions to management, or it can amount to a more productive balance of naturally contending yet mutually dependent parties. Experience shows that, with a peculiar intensity, American managers have been loathe to engage in harmonious relations with labor for very long and that their cooperation soon turns to conflict and their olive branches into switchblades. It need not happen in this case, but it probably will, which may please some critics who apparently prefer conflict and the blade whatever the occasion.

Unions are to members what lawyers are to clients, advocates. As such they are basically *adversaries* of employers—not *enemies*, out to close the company down and destroy it, nor *partners*, getting an equitable share of what counts, power and profits. In collective bargaining they seek the optimal possible *settlement*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and they use what legal means they can to get it, including threats and sweet-talk, carrots and sticks, cooperation and conflict. These days, getting a good settlement is rough because the times are rough and because Reagan's NLRB is sitting hard on labor. Hence the need for labor to count far more on political than collective bargaining solutions to get what it wants.

UAW critics will go their way without leave from me, but if their interest is in workers rather than class conflict (which will persist without their aid) then they might turn more attention to the larger-than-Saturn universe of problems, including most prominently the political question of how to restore our basic industries and the jobs in them. Talk to any workers in endangered industries and they will tell you emphatically that this is what desperately troubles them. Borden touches the problem when he mentions massive GM cutbacks, but that's as far as he goes.

No good at all to say, as some do, that these heavy, male industries may after all be good riddance and that, in effect, blue-collar workers should go study typing. What, then, should we say? A further lowering of the dollar's value in order to stimulate exports and decrease imports? An effort, made without damaging compromises, to help make our industries more competitive in world markets? Limits on capital exports such as other countries have? Protection of endangered domestic markets, through the various devices used in most other countries? Industrial and public-policy supports to prop up the temporarily lame (as Chrysler), stimulate conversion among the seriously ill, and subsidize the birth of new and healthy industries? Revolution? If the UAW doesn't have all the answers, what are those of its critics? Let's hear them. □

On Public Space: A Rejoinder

Editors:

Without exception the articles (on public space, *Dissent*, Fall 1986) are articulate and revealing. Likewise, they are flawed and reflect the problems inherent in any discussion of something as value-laden as community planning.

Marx spoke of the "idiocy" of rural life, and Walzer falls into this same trap. Freedom, choice, a society built upon reciprocity and caring must exist for all. These values are not spatially derived nor do they have meaning only for those living and working in urban places. Walzer's urban bias reflects the values of the larger consumerist and materialist culture of the times. We have consistently seen its destructive force in the countries of the developing world, for example. Operating within such a theoretical mode, numerous nations have been persuaded to abandon their rural and agricultural sectors to support rapid industrialization and urbanization, with largely catastrophic results.

Both Walzer and Berman tell us, ultimately, that urban values are socialist ones. Country things, then, must surely be premodernist. In reality, of course, both are really lambasting the suburbanization of America. While I will grant that many who have fled to the suburbs did so to avoid paying the costs which Berman mentions, he must be aware that the process of suburbanization has been stimulated by several decades of federal policy, both Democratic and Republican. Be it tax write-offs for home ownership, the extension of the interstate system and infrastructure investments, or any of the other numerous subsidies to growth and development, we have chosen as a society to do this. In reality, many such communities have grown into some very attractive and nurturing kinds of places. It is critical that we try to understand and appreciate why so many Americans (and increasingly others as well) find in the suburban pattern meaning and quality. "Suburb bashing" must cease; it is unproductive, elitist, and inconsistent with our need to treat seriously a neighborhood selection so many have made. Michael Rustin is correct that suburban living reflects the values of many people at particular stages in the family life cycle and that such communities reflect genuine choices.

I very much appreciate Rustin's sensitivity to the built environment, "[P]eople's identity and sense of the world is expressed and reflected in the buildings they know. . . ." But this is surely the case with the landscape as well. Much of Rustin's argument revolves around the matter of the optimal city size.

But the actual optimal size of a city may not be fundamentally at issue; what is of importance is the very notion of human scale. The problem of scale is *the* essential problem of democratic theory and the essence of the democratic socialist argument. The search for a vision of society which is regenerative, progressive, and meaningful is the quest for an institutional and community life which is scaled to human and humane proportions and reflects the need of individuals, families, communities, and even nations to participate more fully and more directly in a full-bodied and rich cultural, social, economic and political life. This will not be achieved solely by organizing ourselves into cities, though those we do live in and we do create must be great, safe and supportive of the very best things which life has to offer. Rather, we need to evolve a program which sees the integrity of various settlement options. Let the hostility between city and country and suburb end; we need to spend our time worrying about more important things.

Mark B. Lapping, Dean, College of
Architecture and Design, Kansas State U. □

• *Letters must be kept to about 500 words, typed, double-spaced, and carry the full address and name of the sender. We reserve the right to edit letters down to fit our space and to choose which shall be printed. Letters will not be returned to senders unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.* □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Reagan Scandal

As we go to press, new revelations keep pouring out—hypocrisy, adventurism, criminality, violations of democracy.

The administration that preached against dealing with terrorists was itself guilty of secret negotiations with high officials in the terrorist Iranian government. The administration that thundered for "law and order" was itself guilty of violating a congressional ban on military aid to the Nicaraguan contras.

The law was broken by order of the White House basement—and it's hard to believe that upstairs didn't know what downstairs was doing.

At the heart of the scandal is the "secret" war against the Sandinista government—a reactionary obsession of the Reagan people. If possible, with American money; if not, with Iranian money; but also (a brainchild of Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams) money from the Sultan of Brunei. A great triumph of Reaganite policy: the Sultan as "freedom fighter."

Any effort to separate covert sleaze from contra cause is doomed. For what led North and Poindexter to their shenanigans? The Reaganite affair with soiled contras.

Did the President "know?" What does it matter? He knew enough not to know more than he did. His boys were doing the job, and maybe it was better that the boss keep away from details.

Pieties, such as come from Jeane Kirkpatrick, about "protecting the Presidency" are sickening. What comes first is the exposure of the truth. What comes first is the breakdown of the whole Reaganite scheme, serious in purpose if resembling the Three Stooges in style. Above all, what comes first is understanding that this was no aberration, but part of the basic Reaganite design. No accident that a few days after the revelations the administration had the gall to propose further cuts in Medicare.

Let it all come out. We are all watching. And in our next issue we'll have a lot more to say.

I.H.

dissent
521 Fifth Avenue New York, N.Y. 10017

12215 10/31/87
ROCHELLE FRANDERS
711 AMSTERDAM AVENUE
NEW YORK NY
10025

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED